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A BOOK ABOUT THE TABLE.

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VOL. I.



# A BOOK ABOUT THE TABLE.

BY

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“A BOOK ABOUT DOCTORS,” “A BOOK ABOUT LAWYERS,”

“A BOOK ABOUT THE CLERGY.”

&c. &c.

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## THE FIRST VOLUME.

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# A BOOK ABOUT THE TABLE.



## CHAPTER I.

### GRACE AT MEALS.

"The custom of saying grace at meals had, probably, its origin in the early times of the world, and the hunter-state of man, when dinners were precarious things, and a full meal was something more than a common blessing; when a belly-full was a windfall, and looked like a special providence. In the shouts and triumphant songs with which, after a season of sharp abstinence, a lucky booty of deer's or goat's flesh would naturally be ushered home, existed, perhaps, the germ of the modern grace."—*Vide* ELIA'S ESSAY ON "GRACE BEFORE MEAT."

HAD the late Sir Robert Peel been induced to make a speech on thanksgivings before and after meat, he would not have failed to observe that the subject divided itself under three heads. Having declared his approval of the pious usage which in every Christian household daily renders thanks for daily bread to the Bestower of it, he would have spoken of the occasions for such gratitude, of the forms which most aptly express the proper sentiment, and of the persons by whom those forms should be uttered. The

statesman's favourite mode of discussing topics shall be adopted in this opening chapter of a work which, like its precursors in a series of anecdotal histories, attempts to illustrate a portion of the domestic life of our forefathers.

Though his fine humour caused him to write lightly of festal thanksgivings, Charles Lamb's good sense forbade him to denounce the practice which, with considerations greatly impressive to ordinary men, reminds us at least once a day of our dependence on the divine bounty. "Theoretically" the essayist was no "enemy to graces;" but he had winced under the embarrassments that are apt to arise from their unseasonable or indiscreet performance. He had been stirred to ridicule or indignation by incongruities that are always apparent when men, acutely and ostentatiously eager for sensual enjoyment, thank God in nicely chosen terms for His goodness in affording them the opportunity and means for gluttonous excess. He even thought that the usage, which he hesitated to condemn, assigned too much importance to carnal satisfaction, and might be advantageously replaced by a practice that would select the higher pleasures for occasions of special thanksgiving. To prosperous men, secure of daily luxuries as well as daily bread, a good dinner, the cheapest of all the material

comforts daily lavished upon them by fortune, was too mean a thing for extraordinary gratitude.

There were a score of felicities which Elia thought more worthy of exceptional recognition than the delights of eating and drinking. The pleasant walk and friendly meeting were as fruitful of gladness as the juicy steak or plate of fat, tender oysters. Elia wanted thanksgivings for spiritual repasts, a grace before Shakespeare, another for utterance before a reading of Milton, a third in acknowledgment of the joy caused by a perusal of the "Fairy Queen." Had he delighted in the opera as much as the "legitimate drama," he would have suggested that concerts of purely secular music should open with devotional exercise.

It needs no unusual sagacity and power of reasoning to dispose of the humourist's objections to a practice which is chiefly commendable because it fosters in mankind a universal habit of gratitude to the one Giver of all blessings. The enjoyments which Elia preferred to the vulgar pleasures of the table are exceptional. Under any circumstances they must be of irregular recurrence, and concern only a few of the human race. Not one man in a thousand derives vivid gratification from literature; and it is not often that we, who



are readers, come upon a new book the excellences of which dispose the most thankful and devout of us to say grace for its publication. Nor do we care to read Shakespeare and Milton every day of our lives. Music will never be a universal delight; and the average toiler of East London will experience no sensible diminution of happiness when Sir Richard Wallace moves his artistic treasures from Bethnal Green to private galleries. The higher enjoyments are for the higher natures. But men of lofty soul and subtlest powers resemble folk of inferior quality in needing and relishing daily bread.

The pleasure is not more universal than the necessity of eating. Men may live to eat. They must eat to live. This fact is obvious alike to the prig who thinks it unphilosophic, and to the ascetic who deems it sinful, to enjoy a good dinner. Food is the foundation of all human felicity. Though its immediate pleasures are inferior to several enjoyments, it is the root of all mundane blessings. With it, all the finer joys are, under favourable conditions, attainable. Without it, all enjoyment ceases. Elia, deprived of food, would soon have lost all strength for "pleasant walk" and "moonlight ramble," all yearning for "friendly meetings," all appetite for "spiritual repasts." That he relished the ethereal cates for which he required new forms

of grace, was due to those grosser aliments for which he was half-ashamed to say "Thank God." Though deep enough for the humourist's purposes his view of the whole question was superficial. Nor can much be said for the historical suggestion at the opening of his paper. It is far more probable that the custom of saying grace at meals originated in an intelligent recognition of the universal importance of food, as the foundation and source of earthly well-being, than that it had its birth in the clamorous exultation of tribes of savages hastening to satisfy their wolfish hunger with long-desired flesh of deer and goats. Charles Lamb, usually so wise with his wit and drollery, was guilty of nonsense when, after stating his theory of the origin of graces, he wrote gravely, "It is not otherwise easy to be understood why the blessing of food—the act of eating—should have had a particular expression of thanksgiving annexed to it, distinct from that implied and silent gratitude with which we are expected to enter upon the enjoyment of the many other various and good things of existence."

No doubt, the sense of thankfulness for blessings is weakened in some natures—perhaps in the majority of common natures—by the sense of secure possession. We are all too prone to regard as matters of course, and therefore as no affairs

for special gratitude, the comforts which come to us regularly, without forethought, or toil, or anxiety on our part. The greater the need for gracious forms to remind us that the familiar bounties are great bounties. And what though the prosperous, secure of their six courses and dessert after the daily ringing of the dinner-bell, are incapable of such gratitude for a good meal as is felt by men whose means of living are precarious? How can the exceptional lot of these favourites of fortune discredit the universal practice, which was instituted for the edification of the many who live on herbs, as well as of the few who do their pleasure with stalled oxen?

The rich men, at whose tables Elia sometimes sat a *rarus hospes*, could be counted by tens, whilst their poor neighbours, to each of whom a savoury dinner was a windfall, numbered thousands. And who holds his prosperity by so sure a tenure that no enemy can wrest it from him? The very conditions of civilized life, which, under ordinary circumstances, give us the advantage over savages, may become instruments for reducing us to famine. The Prussians march on Paris; and ere six months have passed, the besieged multitude grow lean and gaunt from hunger, and luxurious epicures, to whom hippophagy had been a mere jest or curious subject of speculation, are glad to fill themselves with



sawdust and vermin. Moreover, grace for meat is not limited to the material "creatures" of the abundant board, which in seasons of peace and plenty are easily attainable. It covers the power to enjoy, as well as the substantial means of enjoyment. There is no feast to be thankful for in the absence of desire for food, or if good digestion fails to wait on appetite. And who can say how long he may retain the physical conditions, which are no less needful than sufficient dishes, for the enjoyment of our daily bread? Regarded as the chief and type of all material comforts, food will continue to be the subject and occasion for universal thankfulness. Wits may be smart against the grateful usage, but simple men will not depart from their old way at the order of flippancy. And even though the custom of saying them audibly should pass from us, grace at meals will rise silently from thankful hearts.

Unanimous in their gratitude for meat, our people differ in opinion as to the occasions for expressing it. Some think it enough to be audibly thankful for dinner, and acknowledge the blessing of breakfast silently. Others are vocally grateful for every meal to which they "sit down." Country folk are, upon the whole, more eloquent of thanks for daily bread than Londoners; and in the country your most copious sayers of grace

must be sought amongst Nonconformists, or in serious coteries with a strong sympathy for dissent. I know of pleasant households amongst those sober kinds of rural folk, where "high tea" is preluded with offering of thanks as ceremoniously as dinner or supper. But the severest precisian of my acquaintance will partake of such flying refreshment as "a glass of sherry and a biscuit" without a special entreaty that it may be blessed to his use. All the "sects" and "sets" concur in holding that mere "snacks" and "stirrup-cups" should be taken without formal thanks to the Great Giver. In our Catholic time, the Church prescribed grace before and after the two chief meals of the day, a rule which the popular sentiment of a later period commended in the adage,

"Grace for supper, and grace for dinner,  
Or you'll justly be thought a graceless sinner."

At the modern dinner, which corresponds to the supper of our forefathers, one half of this order is observed even in the lightest circles of worldly society. But in many households that are not chargeable with irreverence, grace has fallen into disuse at lunch (the dinner of olden time), unless children are present at it, when, as the dinner of the youngsters, it becomes an occasion for utterance of thanks.

Of forms of grace it may be asserted that those are most acceptable to taste and judgment which are chiefly remarkable for briefness and simplicity of diction. A grace should only suggest the disposition appropriate to a receiver of benefits. Neither a homily nor a prayer, it should touch the note of thankfulness, and forbear to repeat it. Addressing the heart rather than the mind, it should not explain itself, or justify itself by argument. The church, the chapel, and the private closet are the proper scenes for fuller utterances of gratitude. In the dining-room it is enough to say, "Thanks to God for all his blessings."

Not much can be said in commendation of the wordy and elaborate Latin graces which have come to us from mediæval churchmen, and may still be heard in the halls of ancient colleges. They have a pleasant savour of antiquity. They remind the hearer of the scholastic pedantries that prevailed amongst the learned at the dates of their composition. To men, who learnt and chanted them in their boyhood, they may have agreeable associations and be fruitful of sweet memories; but for the purpose which their composers may be supposed to have had in view, they are ineffectual. Regarded as academic exercises or ecclesiastical offices, they may be meritorious; but they fail to stir the chords which a grace should touch lightly, and

only for a moment. Thanks should be cordial and spontaneous; whereas these antique arrangements of nicely considered praise, with their several parts for priest and respondents, are ostentatiously artificial. Save that they are shorter and more intelligible, the several graces in the vulgar tongue, which have descended to us from the Reformation Period, are in no way preferable to the academic thanksgivings. Sermons in miniature, some of them say too much. Others have a supplicatory character, and might be mistaken for collects rejected by the compilers of the Common Prayer. A few of them are really wonderful specimens of compressed thought; but all are more or less frigid, angular, and conventional—none are simple thanks.

Even more objectionable, for their artificiality and tediousness, are the musical graces which have in these later years become fashionable at public dinners. One seeks in vain for a reason why people, when they feast together in large numbers, should thank God for meat and drink by a process which none of them would think of using at a familiar board. Intelligible only to the musical, these operatic thanksgivings are positive inflictions to ordinary hearers; whilst they are little better than “fantastic” impertinences to the expert in melody when he is sincerely moved to gratitude

for an abundant meal. No composer or vocalist ever chants his thanks for a beef-steak pudding in his private parlour.

Rather than these harmonious performances, which put the words of praise out of hearing, I would have the silent grace of the Quakers and the military messes. No form at all is better than one which robs a pious practice of its sincerity and earnestness.

And who is the fittest person to utter the simple grace which should prelude every ceremonious repast? The question is no new one. "In houses," says Charles Lamb, "where the grace is as indispensable as the napkin, who has not seen that never settled question as to *who shall say it?* while the good man of the house and the visitor clergyman, or some other guest, belike of next authority from years or gravity, shall be bandying about the office between them as a matter of compliment, each not unwilling to shift the burden of an equivocal duty from his own shoulders."

In the days of our grandfathers, it was generally understood, that "respect for the cloth" required the lay host to assign the duty to the principal ecclesiastic at his table. In the absence of clergy, the entertainer might himself "ask the blessing." But for him to utter it in the presence of sacred clerk or minister, was to "pass over" the holy



man and commit an irreverence. Importuned for a grace, Elia's friend, C. V. L., used to say significantly "Thank God," when he had first inquired, "Is there no clergyman at table?"

This moribund, but not quite obsolete, fashion of asking the clergyman to say grace, had its origin in times when every important household had a clerical officer, and when the ceremonious graces of great tables were in a tongue that required a scholarly utterer. Composed in the religious houses, for use in monastic halls and collegiate refectories, the old Latin graces were carried from the cloisters to the castles, whose seigniors were too proud to thank the Almighty for His blessings, except by deputy. Thus introduced to secular life, the Latin graces passed from courts to the homes of courtiers, from the baron's board to the knight's table, and thence to the tables of inferior quality who delighted in copying the ways of their betters. Municipalities adopted the noble fashion; and merchants, in their houses, were pleased to preface their ceremonious suppers with the graces spoken at the banquets of their guilds. In his common life, the London alderman was content to declare his thankfulness in his mother-tongue; but when he invited his neighbours to feast with him, on his daughter's marriage or his son's coming of age, he invited his parish priest, or the chaplain of his

Company, in order that the banquet should be hallowed with grace of a grander and politer sort. The intervention of a priest was necessary for the proper rendering of some of the more elaborate Latin graces, with their parts for "Sacerdos" and their "responses."

The fashion, which thus arose in our Catholic time, was extended in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the successive ecclesiastical convulsions that increased the number of the clergy, who were glad to officiate as chaplains in private families. In times when every well-to-do squire entertained some ejected priest or minister, it was unusual for a gentle family to sit down to meat in the absence of a reverend personage, whose principal duties under his patron's roof were to read prayers daily in the hall, and say grace at table. Under these circumstances it concerned the dignity of every host, who affected gentility, that the thanks rendered at his board should be spoken by one of the cloth. Vanity joined hands with superstition; and a grand repast was deemed an imperfect affair if no clerk proclaimed its eaters' gratitude.

At the present time, there is a growing sentiment among our clergy that their cloth is more honoured by the breach than by the observance of this old-world fashion, which for the moment converts the

clergyman selected for the office into his host's domestic chaplain. Some of our ecclesiastics even refuse to support the falling custom, which appears to imply that the thanksgivings of laity are not completely acceptable to the Creator unless they come to Him through priestly lips. There are also social critics who urge that a clergyman is the one person who should not be invited to the office of grace-sayer. Graces, it is urged, besides being simple, should be uttered with simplicity. The clerical tone, or any kind of conventional seriousness, is fatal to their effect on earthly hearers. It robs them of the naturalness and air of spontaneity which should characterize such declarations. It emphasizes the formality of a form that ought to be as far as possible devoid of ceremony. And it must be admitted that not one clergyman in a hundred can say grace without reminding his hearers that he is a clergyman, and making them feel that they are a congregation assembled for religious admonition, rather than a company gathered together for social enjoyment.

Perhaps the simplest, and therefore most effective, utterers of graces at table are well-mannered children. No company can desire a better orator of their thanks to the Almighty than a pretty little girl, who, doing with matter of fact self-possession and winning gravity what she does daily for the

familiar good, puts her hands together meekly and speaks the grateful words. Small boys are seldom such felicitous performers of grace as their sisters. But sometimes they discharge the thankful duty with nice propriety. And there is good authority for recording that in olden time little fellows, with neatly combed locks, commonly officiated as grace-clerks at their parents' tables.

In his capital "booke of the good Nourture for children," entitled "The Schoole of Vertue," (A.D. 1557), Master Seager admonishes the youthful reader thus,

"When thy parentes downe to the table shall syt,  
 In place be ready for the purpose most fyt;  
 With sober countenance, lookynge them in the face,  
 Thy hands holdynge up, thus begin grace:  
 'Geve thankes to God with one accorde  
 For that shall be set on this borde,  
 And be not careful what to eate,  
 To eche thyng lyvyng the Lord sends meate;  
 For foode he wyll not se you peryshe,  
 But wyll you fede, foster and cheryshe;  
 Take well in worth what he hath sent,  
 At thys time be therewith content

Praysynge God.'

So treatable speakyng, as possibly thou can,  
 That the hearers thereof may thee understan.  
 Grace beyng sayde, low cursie make thou,  
 Sayinge 'much good may it do you.'"

Having followed up grace with this civil wish, the little man of Seager's "Schoole of Vertue" bestirred

himself in the duties of a gentle serving-page to the best of his ability, ministering to the comfort of others before he took his own share of the repast. If elders in olden time were served before their juniors, the youngsters were spared the annoyance of sitting listlessly with folded hands, and hungrily eyeing the savoury dishes which they might not touch. Their zeal and interest in their ministerial duties spared them the sharp discomforts of expectancy felt by children, who may only watch and sit still, till they get their portions.

In the absence of clergy and children, the choice of a grace-sayer lies between the host and the mistress of the house; for the quite obsolete fashion of imposing the duty on an important guest, out of compliment to his importance, was too snobbish and ridiculous for anyone to desire its revival. There are reasons why the host, as the bread-winner and human giver of the feast, might be thought the fittest person to offer thanks to the divine Giver. But if he has a wife, *Amphitryon* will usually do well to make her the orator. As speakers of graces, laymen are seldom more successful than clerks. They are usually sheepish or pompous. Your master of the house is rarely a good performer. If he does not hurry through the thanksgiving, as though he deemed it a piece of trifling, and were ashamed of his part in the puerile



transaction, he becomes a burlesque of solemnity and opens the feast as though he were burying a friend. It is otherwise with his wife. Her voice cannot be unmusical; and womanly taste and instinct enable her to hit the proper vocal note between colloquial lightness and religious severity. Moreover, the duty becomes her place. Thanks for daily bread are fitly offered by her whose distinctive title proclaims her the distributor of it.

My experience of graces discredits the cynical sentiment that gratitude is thankfulness for favours to come. Thanks after meat are usually far more emphatic and cordial than graces before it. Hunger is an enemy to pious emotion. The ravenous Christian is too much occupied with sharp desire and painful craving, to have a devout regard for the mercies he is only on the point of receiving. But full of wine and venison, the satisfied feaster speaks from the plenitude of a grateful heart. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that the tone and words of the later grace are sometimes expressive of disappointment and critical censure. Everyone remembers the story of the clerical humourist, who, on being pressed to say an after-dinner grace at a table where he had been too frequently regaled with rabbits, observed significantly :—

“Of rabbits young and rabbits old,  
Of rabbits hot and rabbits cold,  
Of rabbits tender and rabbits tough,  
Thank the Lord, *I have had enough!*”

The memory, also, comes to me of Dr. Clement, courtliest and kindest of physicians, who had a series of after-dinner graces that nicely expressed the degrees of his thankfulness. When he had partaken of a faultless repast, he would reward Mrs. Clement with a radiant smile, and then turning his eyes upwards, say emphatically, “Thank God for an *excellent* dinner.” A dinner of merit, though of inferior excellence, was acknowledged devoutly with, “Thank God for a *good* dinner.” An ordinary regalement, that would justify neither special praise nor positive reproof, elicited no heartier grace than, “Well! I am thankful for my dinner.” But when the repast had consisted of cold meats, and unpalatable reproductions of yesterday’s fare, the worthy man used to pray in a plaintively lugubrious tone of grievance, as though he were protesting against ill-usage, and imploring an impossibility. “May the Lord make me thankful for *what I have received!*” On hearing this dolorous entreaty, Mrs. Clement seldom failed to deliver some equally appropriate and edifying remarks on the sin of daintiness. But to her honour, it must be recorded, that the offensive hint was not

thrown away upon her. To the last the doctor's graces were instructions to his wife, as well as thanks to Heaven.

On festal days, in some of our civic and collegiate halls, after-dinner grace is attended with usages, alike ancient and courteous. One of them is the passing round of "*poculum caritatis*," or "loving cup," whose scarcely palatable contents will be mentioned in a later section of this work.

Much, also, might be said about obsolete or almost disused forms of thanksgiving of meat, one of the strangest of which is the grace still acted, instead of spoken, at the terminal dinners at Clifford's Inn. After the banquets of that learned society, members and guests rise, on the removal of the white cloth, and witness the following thanksgiving in pantomime. Before the president of the second table the butler puts a mass of bread, consisting of four loaves, adhering to each other by their kissing crusts. Taking this mass of bread in his right hand, the said president of the second table slowly raises it above his head to the full reach of his arm, and after a few moments' pause brings it down with a thunderous whack on the oaken table. A second time the bread is elevated, and struck upon the resounding board. Yet a third time the feat is performed; and then, before strangers have had time to recover from

their astonishment, the grace-actor has thrown the bread so that it slides and spins down to the bottom of the long table, where it is caught up by the butler, who instantly runs out of the dining-hall with it in his outstretched hands. The whole grace is typical. The four loaves represent the four Gospels; the three elevations are in reverence of the three persons of the Sacred Trinity; the manner in which the bread is cast down the table, indicates the liberality with which the Bread of Life was given to mankind; the alacrity with which the butler runs out of the hall exemplifies the alacrity with which zealous servants hasten to distribute the bread of spiritual knowledge to those who hunger for it. The date of this singular grace is unknown; but it is certainly of ancient origin, and no one can question that it sprung from devout sentiment. It teaches that, whilst grateful for the bread which only sustains perishable existence, men should be far more thankful for the bread which affords eternal Life.

## CHAPTER II.

## BRITONS AT TABLE.

"The Aborigines of Britain, to come nearer home, could have no great expertness in cookery, as they had no oil, and we hear nothing of their butter. They used only sheep and oxen, eating neither hares, though greatly esteemed at Rome, nor hens, nor geese, from a notion of superstition. Nor did they eat fish. There was little corn even in the interior part of the island; but they lived chiefly on milk and flesh."—*Vide* REV. SAMUEL PEGGE'S INTRODUCTION TO "THE FORME OF CURY."

"L'univers n'est rien que par la vie, et tout ce qui vit se nourrit.—Les animaux se repaissent, l'homme mange; l'homme d'esprit seul sait manger.—La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent.—Le Créateur, en obligeant l'homme à manger pour vivre, l'y invite par l'appétit, et l'en récompense par le plaisir."—BRILLAT-SAVARIN'S "APHORISMS."

IN the last century before the Christian era, an important suggestion respecting the origin of cookery was made by Posidonius of Rhodes, who was so perfect a stoic that, whilst experiencing the sharpest pangs of gout, he could converse cheerfully with Pompey on the agreeable excitements of pain, and declare that his bodily disturbance could not be justly termed a malady, as it was no evil.

To this philosopher, who could enjoy a toothache and think sciatica a blessing, it occurred that cooking of the simplest kind was a mere imitation



of natural processes, and that, in respect to his culinary needs, every man might "paddle his own canoe." Any man provided with a good set of teeth, glands for the secretion of saliva, a tongue, and the usual apparatus for digestion, could prepare his own bread by merely consuming the grain of which bread might be made in a more troublesome fashion. His teeth could do the work of a mill; with the help of a natural secretion, his tongue could knead the materials which the teeth had ground; muscular action might be trusted to put the dough into an oven—the bread-maker's stomach—where it would be properly prepared for the nutrition of the body. All that a professional cook could do in the matter was to copy the operations of the bodily machine. Under certain circumstances the copyist might lighten the body's labour, but he could never do away with the need of it. Every man, in fact, was supplied with an excellent cooking apparatus, and should be his own cook.

Fortunately for the readers of this work, it is not necessary that they should trace the culinary art through every stage of its development, from the time when man took his first step to gastronomic proficiency from a consideration of the body's way of dealing with uncooked corn. But they should reflect on the historic certainty that eating pre-

ceded cookery, which art must be regarded as the invention of luxury rather than necessity. And having thus glanced at the dismal period which preceded the earliest practices of the kitchen, they should consider for a few minutes the culinary barbarism of our rather remote and very "rude forefathers."

"Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es," "Tell me what thou eatest and I will tell thee what thou art," said Brillat-Savarin, pointing to a grand truth. Just as the man who drinks beer inordinately, thinks it, the gross feeder is sure to be a heavy thinker. The man who lives on beef-steaks may be robust, but he is not likely to have nice instincts or a subtle mind. There are limits, however, to the applicability of every maxim, and conditions under which the wisest rules will mislead its inconsiderate followers. Mention could be made of gastronomic eccentricities from which the epicurean Frenchman would have drawn wrong inferences, in spite of his sagacity and fine knowledge of human nature. Dryden delighted in the huge masses of almost raw meat that gave him restless nights and a wakeful muse. Lord Eldon's teeth and eyes never failed to water from delight when his nostrils caught the smell of fried pig's liver and bacon. George the First's\* liveliest gust was for

\* "Heliogabalus and George I. had this in common, that they

putrid oysters. Had M. Brillat-Savarin rashly estimated those three feeders from their favourite refreshments he would have called the first a prize-fighter, the second a ploughman, and the third a beast. In which case he would have been quite wrong with respect to the poet and the peer, and not altogether right regarding the king.

Judged from the gastronomic point of view, it must be confessed that our British ancestors, at the time of the Roman conquest, were persons for whom we have cause to blush. Whatever his pride of descent, there is a point in his pedigree where every man finds it well to relinquish curiosity about his lineal forefathers. It is never prudent for the chief of a noble house to seek for the story of its founder's grandfather. For myself, if I could trace my familiar stock to a gentle Briton of the Roman period, I would rest content and ask no questions about his grandfather of pre-Roman time. Even a Welshman would be slow to boast himself the direct representative of a chieftain who was at best a pious cannibal, with a quick eye for tit-bits at a Druidical banquet.

both liked fish a trifle stale. Thus, it is known that George never cared for oysters till their shells began spontaneously to gape; and the Oriental master of the Roman Empire, who made a barber prefect of his provisions, except at a great distance from the sea, when they acquired the taint he loved."—*Vide* DORAN'S "TABLE TRAITS WITH SOMETHING ON THEM." (Second Edition). 1854.

When history first condescended to notice our British forefathers, their cooking was of Posidonian simplicity. Indeed, it is questionable whether their culinary practice covered all the operations noticed by the stoical observer. Diodorus Siculus, an authority on many matters at this date, albeit an arrant and ludicrously inaccurate book-maker, something less than two thousand years since, assures us that they lived chiefly on dried corn, which they brayed in mortars, and worked into a heavy paste. The mightiest chieftain of them all had never a morsel of butter wherewith to lubricate this farinaceous mess. When corn failed these eaters of paste, hunger gave them appetite for acorns—the food of swine, and so bitter a substitute for meat, that the men of these luxurious days can scarcely believe it to have ever been a common article of diet. It is less generally known, that the same nauseous fare was consumed in seasons of scarcity by our ancestors of much more recent time. But William Harrison,\* supremely first of Elizabethan chroniclers, assures us that, even in his day, the poorer folk of England sometimes ate a bread made partly or altogether of acorns.

\* "The bread," he says in his Introduction to Holinshed's Chronicles, "throughout the lande is made of such graine as the soile yealdeth, neverthelesse the gentilitie commonlie provide themselves sufficientlie of wheat for their own tables, whilst their household and poor neighbours in some shires are inforced to content

There were hard times, when, in the dearth of mast, the aborigines of our productive land devoured herbs and roots, even more distasteful and indigestible than the fruit of the oak. But they had palliatives for the torments of famine. Harrison records that in the Northern districts they possessed a "certaine kind of confection," made, probably, of earth and the inspissated juices of narcotic herbs, a small pill of which alleviated wonderfully the pain of fasting. Another of their measures against hunger is more singular and incredible. In the extremity of their anguish, the famished wretches had recourse to a primitive kind of water-cure. Creeping out to the fens and morasses, they placed themselves in "moorish plots up unto their chins,"

themselves with rie or barlie, yea, and in time of dearth, manie with bread made either of beans, peason or otes, *or of altogether or some acorns among*, of which scourge the poorest doo soonest taste, sith they are least able to provide themselves of better. I will not saie that this extremitie is oft so well to be seene in time of plentie as of dearth, but if I should, I could easily beare my triall. For albeit there be much ground now eared in euerie place, than hath beene of late yeares, yet such a price of corne continueth in each towne and market without anie just cause (except it be that landlords doo get licenses to carie corne out of the lande onelie to keepe up the prices for their owne private gaines and ruine of the commonwealth), that the artificer and poore labouring man is not able to reach unto it; but is driven to content himself with horse-corne, I mean beanes, peason, otes, tares, and lintels, and therefore it is a true proverbe, that 'hunger setteth his foot in the horse-manger.'"

—*Vide* WILLIAM HARRISON'S "INTRODUCTION."



and sat for hours at a time in mud and water. They were of opinion that the cold and wet "qualified the heats of their stomachs," and weakened their yearning for food. Strange to say, the efficacy of this process has not been fully tested in these days of scientific inquiry. But any reader of this work who is prone to be irritable when his wife keeps him waiting for dinner, may easily make trial of the frigid treatment. Instead of venting his displeasure at an absent wife in angry words, let him retire to his bath-room, turn on the cold water, and sit in it till she has returned from her afternoon's drive. He will, of course, select for the experiment a day in the sharpest season of winter.

It may not, however, be inferred from the Sicilian's inadequate account of early British fare, that the Britons were vegetarians. We have a better authority on the subject in Julius Cæsar, who studied the barbarous islanders whilst he was subjugating them, and who put it on record that they were habitual consumers of flesh and milk. Superstition forbade them to eat the goose, the hare, and the chicken, and they were strangely neglectful of the fishes that abounded in their rivers. But they were eaters of meat. Though the savour of a perfectly roasted sirloin of beef may have never delighted their nerves of taste and smell, they devoured on gaudy days huge lumps

of badly broiled flesh. On especial occasions, also, they were partakers of those bloody and repulsive banquets, to which I have already alluded, with a flippancy that will be sternly reprobated by censors, whose treatment of serious subjects is always in the best taste.

But though the early British chieftain's table may, under ordinary circumstances, have possessed the materials for gross gluttony, no words can palliate its shortcomings. At the best it was graceless, comfortless, and savage. It had neither a code of etiquette, nor a soup, nor any sauce but hunger. It is believed to have been altogether without the means of intoxication.

The Roman occupation was beneficent to the conquered people in culinary matters. Together with his munitions and rules of war, the conqueror brought his science and implements of cookery. Provided with various stew-pans and half-a-score of piquant zests, he used them as means of government no less than as instruments of selfish gratification. Cooks completed the work which the triumphant legions had only begun. The latter had only crushed and terrified a turbulent people—the former afforded timely consolation to the fallen race, and, by giving them a new field of enjoyment, inspired them with self-respect and hope. Cookery and civilization are not purchased too dearly by

barbarians who acquire them by the sacrifice of a more or less imaginary independence. The more intelligent of the Britons thought so, as they sniffed the steaming pottages, and sipped the wines of their victors. Physical force gave culinary art the requisite time for the exercise of its influence; but the captains would have failed if the chefs had not been equal to the occasion. Cookery reconciled the islanders to the presence and sway of the foreigner. No doubt, the older and less adaptive of the aborigines scorned the allurements of Roman kitchens, and, holding to their old notions respecting unclean and sacred meats, disdained to dip their fingers in a bowl of cocky-leekie. But the younger islanders, surrendering themselves to savoury fascinations, learnt to bless the conqueror who taught them to appreciate the oyster, to stew the goose, to jug the hare, and cook the pullet in half a hundred ways. Having accepted the foreigner's government on compulsion, they took his sauces from preference, and his ragouts from gastronomic affection.

The German immigrants who settled in Britain during the Roman occupation, were also alive to the merits of the cookery practised by the rulers and superior aborigines of their adopted land. Caring chiefly for the quantity, they were not indifferent to the quality of their viands. That they

delighted in rich soups is indicated by the Saxon name which, from the time of Alfred to that of Henry the Seventh, designated a variety of thick stews, and is still preserved in the terms of culinary art. Broth and bread are Saxon words; the former of the two words was part of the verb "briwan, to cook," whence also came "brewing," the process of making malt liquor, and "brewets," the popular name in mediæval England for highly seasoned hotch-potches of stewed meat, thickened with meal. In "steak" and "steam" we have two other philological indications of the care expended by the Saxons on gastronomic art. We should not be justified in crediting them with the re-invention, or even with the introduction of malt liquor, a drink known to the ancient Egyptians. On acquiring a taste for alcohol from the Romans, the Britons learnt from the same teachers how to prepare wine from corn. But it is to the honour of the Saxons, that at a happy moment of genial inspiration they gave malt-brewet the expressive title of "ale"—the cheerful giver of warmth.

Though its name is of Greek extraction, butter is an article of food that was probably brought to this country by the Teuton immigrants. "Churn" is a Saxon term. The Romans were connoisseurs of "cheese;" but with their southern taste for oil, as the proper instrument of culinary lubrication,

they disdained to use at their tables the greasy substance whose chief title to their respect was its efficacy, when employed as a medicinal unguent. Indeed, butter was a thing of curiosity rather than of service to the ancients of Greece and Rome. Its use, for any dietetic purpose, was confined to a few of the old peoples. The Israelites were no consumers of the oily mass. This is one of the points on which Biblical commentators have ceased to differ. The "chamea," offered to the vanquished Sisera on a "lordly dish" by the most treacherous murderess of all history, was a preparation of thick milk. It was a fluid that, to a poetic imagination, might have run down in streams. It certainly was no such product as farmers' wives were wont to sell by the pint in Suffolk, and by the yard in Cambridgeshire. The Greeks derived their knowledge of badly made butter from the Thracians, the Phrygians, and the Scythians. The same knowledge came to the Romans from Germany, to whose barbarous tribes Pliny attributes the invention of the process for collecting the oily particles from milk.

In proportion as his climate is colder, man requires for his comfort and support a larger supply of heat-producing aliment. The pie-men of St. Petersburg pour train-oil on their pies, to the satisfaction of their customers. Sir John Franklin, to



his surprise and alarm, saw an Esquimaux youth consume fourteen pounds of tallow candles at a single sitting; and the young gentleman was desirous of continuing the feast, when Sir John, who had offered to give him as many candles as he could eat, bought him off with the present of a large lump of fat pork. Possessing the butyric art, it is reasonable to suppose that the Northern Germans, living in a rigorous atmosphere, were great consumers of butter. They may also be credited with introducing to this country the preparation which was unknown to the Britons of the pre-Roman period. One can believe that a wholesomely superstitious dame of the Saxon race was the originator of the pious maxim, "Don't swear, or the butter won't come." To the same source, also, may be referred the adage, preserved in Thomas Cogan's "Haven of Health" (1596), "Butter is gold in the morning, silver at noon, and lead at night."

The withdrawal of the Romans was a serious blow to gastronomy in Britain; but it would be a mistake to suppose that their culinary practice disappeared with their arms. Cookery is an art whose lessons are not speedily forgotten. Conservative in all that pertains to social usages, man is especially so in matters of the table. It is, therefore, impossible that the superior aborigines, who had been slowly, and at first reluctantly, weaned from the gross

tastes of their forefathers, would immediately lapse into culinary barbarism on the disappearance of the benefactors whose arts and garb they had adopted. Nor were the Germans neglectful of the precepts of the Roman epicures. Power is the nurse of luxury; and with their growing influence the Saxons doubtless exhibited a finer taste in eating.

It has been too much the fashion with writers to deride the meanness and coarseness of Saxon fare. In his sweet bread and bright butter, the Thane had two important requisites for a good table. Though inferior to fermented juices of the grape, his daily liquor was no contemptible drink. The potage was always present when his board was spread. Rome had taught him how to treat deer and small game, the flesh of swine and oxen, and the meat of wild-fowl. Fish was one of his favourite foods, and he cooked eggs in divers fashions.

In the absence of *garum*, he was not without some meritorious sauces and relishes. Nor was his table wanting in other evidences of refinement. Saxon art has transmitted to us proofs that the later Saxons covered their tables with linen cloths, used napkins, and were served ceremoniously by kneeling ministrants. I am disposed to think that, on their arrival in this country, the *luxurious* Normans, as

they are always termed in popular history, brought with them few kitchen luxuries that were not familiar to the vanquished chieftains.

On the other hand, due allowance must be made for the natural propensities of a robust and phlegmatic people, who were certainly less disposed to daintiness than to gluttony. Often immoderate, the Saxons were seldom fastidious eaters. In drinking, they cared little for flavour, provided they could achieve their principal objects—the excitement and stupefaction of drunkenness.

In these respects, the Danes resembled the Saxons. Rivalling them in gluttony, they appear to have surpassed them in toping. To the Danes, our ancestors are indebted for those of their old drinking usages, that are most strongly significant of intemperance. The representative men of the two stocks are remembered for their excesses in feasting, as well as for their policies. The virtuous Alfred did not practise moderation in diet, until he had paid a heavy penalty for gross indulgence. Canute the Hardy prided himself on his ostentatious and incessant hospitalities, and on adding two meals to the daily regalements of his aristocracy. It is noteworthy that each of these kings suffered severely from bridal feasting. Alfred the Great injured his constitution irreparably, by swinish excess at his own wedding. Something more than

a hundred and seventy years later, Canute the Hardy drank himself to death at a marriage banquet. So perished the Dane, of whom history records, "He covered four times a day the tables, at which all who came to them were welcome guests."

## CHAPTER III.

## ANTIQUE FEASTING.

“Old Lucullus, they say,  
 Forty cooks had each day,  
 And Vitellius’s meals cost a million;  
 But I like what is good  
 When or where be my food,  
 In a chop-house or royal pavilion.

“At all feasts (if enough)  
 I most heartily stuff,  
 And a song at my heart alike rushes,  
 Though I’ve not fed my lungs  
 Upon nightingales’ tongues,  
 Nor the brains of goldfinches and thrushes.”  
 CAPTAIN MORRIS’S “SONGS.”

WHEN it perished, after a long decay, the Roman Empire bequeathed two precious legacies to mankind—its laws and its cookery. The societies that reformed themselves on Theodosian principles, on emerging from the disorder and violence of universal anarchy, followed the culinary precepts which Rome had taught and illustrated in her period of highest luxury. Social convulsions had never caused a general neglect of those rules. To suppose that the Apician code fell out of sight and practice during the struggles



which preceded and followed the empire's dissolution, is to surpass in imaginative error the historians who long maintained that the mediæval civilians were indebted for their system to the accidental discovery of a copy of Justinian's pandects.

Political agitations lessen neither the appetite nor the need for food. The people of a falling State must have their pottage. Public calamity may occupy the mind, but it cannot satisfy the belly. War and flight only sharpen the desire for meat and drink. The fasting soldier cannot fight; the hungry fugitive falls behind his comrades. It is the same with private sorrow. The death of a virtuous citizen is an occasion for offering a funeral banquet to his mourners. Whilst Rome lay gasping on her death-bed, spits turned before her kitchen-fires. When she was dead, and her heirs were struggling desperately for one or another of the dis-severed portions of her estate, the spits went on turning, and her cooks, the slaves of precedent, prepared their sauces, and seasoned their dishes, by the rules of Apicius, even as our English cooks followed the directions of Mrs. Glasse and Mrs. Rundell on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, and as they would obey the orders of Acton and Ude, if the Germans were marching on London, or Mr. Odger were First President of the British Republic.

Religion passes from east to west; cookery northwards from the south. Our earliest dinners were brought us by the legions of Cæsar. And from that dawn of gastronomic science on our island, whenever cookery has languished amongst us, she has looked to the South for new ideas and another inspiration. It was so at the decay of feudalism, at the Caroline restoration, and at the beginning of the present century. The influence of ancient Rome may still be recognized in our soups and entrées, our sausages and salads. Lobster rissoles were invented and brought to perfection by Heliogabalus.

But though we owe a vast debt of gratitude to Rome for her culinary benefactions, we need not shut our eyes to the imperfections and barbaric grossness of her cuisine. If it was a great thing for our remote forefathers to have acquired her system, it was even more fortunate that our nearer ancestors had the intelligence and courage to liberate themselves from its thralldom.

The discomforts and gastronomic outrages of an Augustan supper are so notorious, that no epicure of modern London would care to accept an invitation to a feast served after the manner of the ancients. Even though he had perfect confidence in the Amphytrion's scholarly competence for a

difficult enterprise, he would avoid an entertainment more likely to ruffle his temper, and offend his palate, than to cheer his spirits and gratify his taste. Bearing in mind the requirements of the triclinium he would shrink from a position, fruitful of humiliations and perplexities, which may be realized with sufficient accuracy by any gentleman of an inquiring turn, who will do his best to enjoy a long repast of soups and hashes whilst he lies on a sofa, and wears a dressing-gown of ample folds. Under the most favourable circumstances, a Roman dinner must have been a sloppy affair, even to nicely circumspect feeders. Consumed hastily, in an hour of vexatious and untoward incidents, it must have been less advantageous to the eater than to his tailor. It is creditable to the good sense and natural dignity of our ancestors that, separating Latin cookery from Latin manners, they always *sat* at table when they feasted on Roman fare.

The familiar stories of their gross and fantastic enjoyments would of themselves demonstrate that the voluptuaries of ancient Rome were incapable of the finer delights of the table. Whether we regard the Augustan spendthrifts, or the later *bon-vivants* of the Eastern and Western empires, it may be asserted that the Roman sensualist was devoid of nice perceptions. Always a glutton, he was never

an epicure in the modern sense of the term. The dishes with which he gorged himself, appealed to the fancy rather than the palate; and his imagination preferred grotesque, and even repulsive, ideas to pleasant and cheerful associations. Veditius Pollio, who could not relish a lamprey unless he could imagine it to have been fattened on human flesh, was a type of the many Roman gourmands whose appetite was quickened by cruel fancies. Like the Australian digger, who ate bank-note sandwiches, the Roman gastronomer delighted to eat and drink money. If he could not obtain, or was too amiable to desire, dishes seasoned with human agony, he required patellæ of inordinate cost, and relished them in proportion to the amount of labour expended on their preparation.

Five thousand pounds of money were expended on the pie which made Æsop, the player, famous amongst wasteful feeders, and was believed by the purchaser to have been made of birds that could imitate human voices. Clodius, the son of this preposterous connoisseur of bird-pies, peppered his drink with powdered pearls, and had no gust for the daintiest dish, unless his cook could assure him that a precious stone was one of its ingredients. The imperial inventor of lobster rissoles delighted in salmagundis, made chiefly of the tongues and brains of small birds excellent for musical voice

or brilliance of plumage; and Septimius Geta is memorable for hotch-potches whose various meats, selected without any reference to their flavours, bore names beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. Sheer wastefulness, that squandered on the whimsical humours of a single person the money which, with discriminating expenditure, might have brought felicity to a thousand intelligent epicures, reached its climax in the kitchens of the Apicius of Augustan Rome, who surpassed all the money-eaters of his time in bootless prodigality. The strongest passion of this gormandizing fool was for ragouts of half-a-hundred more or less incongruous elements; and when he had weakened his intellect, and destroyed a naturally fine digestion by gastronomic absurdities, he put a violent end to his excesses with a cup of poison. Having squandered on his belly, in the course of a few years, something more than a million and a half of money (English), he killed himself, rather than prolong existence on the wretched eighty or hundred thousand pounds that still remained in his exchequer.

Were it needful to produce other biographical illustrations against the epicureanism prevalent in the wealthiest circles of ancient Rome, we should select them from anecdotes told of Vitellius, who in less than eight months made away with seven



millions sterling (English money) in extravagances of the table, and encouraged gluttons to prepare themselves for additional courses by taking emetics. Another emperor, famous in the annals of gulosity, was Tiberius, who, with the aid of his courtly physicians, could protract a single banquet for thirty-six hours.

The evidence of such stories accords with the more precise and conclusive testimony of the extant receipts for the choicest dishes of the Roman gluttons. There is no want of information respecting the principles and details of the cuisine that, brought to perfection in ancient Rome, has not to this day been altogether superseded by a better cookery in some of the Latin peoples. A perusal of Dr. Lister's edition of the pseudo-Apicius's cookery-book will instruct the curious scholar respecting the characteristics of the food most grateful to the Roman palate, and also respecting the processes for preparing its principal varieties. Those who are curious, without being scholarly, may gather a sufficient supply of the same information from Mr. Coote's "*Cuisine Bourgeoise of Ancient Rome*."

Covering a period of some three hundred years, that began in the days of the Republic and closed in the time subsequent to Heliogabalus, the "*De Arte*

Coquinariâ" gives us precepts followed by chefs of a date long anterior to the compiler's generation. The choicest receipts of distant ages appear in its records. In this respect, the work resembles modern compilations of the same kind, which together with rules for making dishes, popular in Tudor times, contain directions for producing the choicest delicacies of Ude and Francatelli. The dates, at which some of the Apician dishes were invented, or at least enjoyed a high reputation, may be inferred from the names of famous personages referred to by the titles of the *plats*. But most of the receipts afford no indication of the decades in which they were composed. The entire collection, however, affords an equally comprehensive and minute picture of the Roman cuisine, when Roman luxury was at its height. The compiler is unknown; but if he was not some great man's chef, he was probably some fashionable *gourmet* who assumed, for his literary purpose, a name that had for generations blazed in culinary annals.

It would only weary the reader to burden these pages with Apician details, which the curious can readily gather for themselves, and none but the curious would peruse with interest. Nor would the ordinary perusers of a popular work be thankful for a diversity of receipts which they certainly

would not desire their cooks to execute. It is enough for the present undertaking to call attention to the prominent features of Roman cookery, and to a few receipts that illustrate its leading principles.

## CHAPTER IV.

## APICIAN PRECEPTS.

"From these receipts we may acquire some idea of the complicated and heterogeneous messes which formed the most exquisite delicacies of a Roman table. At the present day, nothing can be conceived more disgusting than many of these dishes; since a variety of ingredients from which a modern would shrink with abhorrence, were cast into them by the cooks of Rome with a lavish hand. Assafetida, rue, &c., were used in almost every high-seasoned dish; and we meet repeatedly with the extraordinary mixtures of oil and wine, honey, pepper, and the putrid distillation from stinking fish. In short, the Roman cook seems to have gone in direct opposition to the selection which the poet makes Eve use in preparing an entertainment, "For," says he, "she so contrived as not to mix

Tastes not well joined, inelegant, but bring  
Taste after taste, upheld with kindest change."

*Vide* REV. RICHARD WARNER'S "ANTIQUITATES CULINARIÆ."

NOTHING can be more liberal and satisfactory than the list of materials employed by the Roman chef. Together with most of the meats, and several kinds of the poultry, still used most largely in European kitchens, his larder contained creatures now-a-days neglected as distasteful, if not condemned as unclean. Though he held it in low esteem, he had need of beef. Wild mutton, veal, lamb, kid, and venison commanded his zealous

attention; but pork, of all meats the most acceptable to the ancient epicures of the sunny South, he could not regard without emotion, or mention without enthusiasm.

Tears of joyful anticipation rolled down his cheeks when the fat porker dropped dead at his feet; and, as he wiped from the prostrate creature's lips the stains of the sweet intoxicating drink which had induced the fatal apoplexy, he smiled with tender exultation. He had reason to love the animal which afforded him materials for his daintiest preparations. His varieties of porcine *plats* are almost countless. The spit, the gridiron, the frying-pan, the oven, the boiler, and the stew-pan were all employed by turns in preparing the flesh which was the passion of Roman epicures, and to which the culinary professors could impart no less than eighty different flavours. The Romans were consumers of pork-haggis and various kinds of pork sausages. But the Apician cook was never prouder of himself and his profession than when he sniffed the fragrant exhalations of a small baked pig which had been stuffed with a compound of thrushes, beccaficos, minced "pluck," dates, onions, snails, mallows, beets, leeks, celery, cabbage, coriander seeds, pepper, pine-nuts, eggs and garum. His hands trembled with fine emotion, as he made a deep incision down the porker's back,



and poured into it a hot mixture of pepper, rue, garum, sweet wine, honey and oil, thickened with frumenty.

The same grossness of taste, which made these epicures of a hot climate prefer pork to more delicate meats, is seen in their choice of four-footed game and birds. The hare, whose strong flavour renders it barely acceptable to the more fastidious palates of modern connoisseurs, was prized by the Latin *bon-vivant* above all other ground-game. The goose and peacock were not more esteemed at Augustan tables than the phœnicopteros and the parrot; and in the sixth book of his Treatise pseudo-Apicius gives a receipt for creatures that he frankly designates "stinking birds" (*aves hircosas*), a class including Ardean cranes and other piscivorous fowl.

The time has now arrived for us to sip the nasty compound of honey, wine, mucilage, and spice, with which the luxurious Roman whetted his appetite and prepared his palate for every important feast. The *Conditum Paradoxum*, as pseudo-Apicius calls it, or the *Promulsis*, as it is more commonly termed, has always been a chief difficulty with modern apologists of the Roman cuisine. Mr. Coote, who grows fervid about the excellences of a sauce made chiefly from the putrid intestines of fish, is significantly silent

concerning the introductory sirup. When Lord Lytton, in the "Last Days of Pompeii," endeavoured to rouse his readers' sympathy for the pleasures of a Pompeian supper, he coyly misrepresented the Promulsis as a drink "of diluted wine sparingly mixed with honey." The exactness of the Apician receipt for the preparation of "the whet" (!) leaves us in no doubt as to the proportion of honey in the cloying liquor, which was compounded in this manner. Six pints of honey, two pints of wine, four ounces of powdered pepper, three ounces of sweet gum, one drachm of spike-nard leaves, one drachm of saffron, and five drachms of dried dates were mixed and boiled three several times. It does not appear how much the three boilings reduced the compound. Having been thus concocted, the mess received sixteen pints of wine, when it was regarded as a choice preliminary confection for an elaborate feast. Six pints of honey is no "sparing" proportion of sweet stuff to eighteen pints of wine. Certainly the "preparation" would not dispose a modern palate to relish the following delicacies. Sooner than begin his dinner with a glass of such a fluid, any epicure of the Carlton Club would attune his palate for a coming dinner with half a pint of treacle and table-beer, seasoned with all-spice.

In connection with the heavily sweetened wine

of the Promulsis, mention may be here made of the Roman taste for wines medicated with mawkish savours that would utterly destroy the fine virtues of the best vintage. Rosatum and Violatium were in high esteem with Apician epicures. The former drink was made thus. Several bags (as many as possible) of dried rose petals were put into a cask, and covered with good wine. The infusion having stood for seven days, the rose-leaves were firmly squeezed, so that the liquor might have every drop of their scented juice. Another and equally large supply of dried petals was then put into the cask, and treated in the same way. This process was repeated yet again; and when the wine had been completely loaded with roseate essence, the tincture was put away for use on highly festal occasions. It would have been more properly thrown into the nearest sewer. Violatium was made in the same manner, with petals of violets instead of petals of roses. It is impossible that people who enjoyed such preparations, fit only for an apothecary's shop, could appreciate the subtler excellences of the fermented grape.

It is the custom of the champions of the Roman cuisine to deplore the misfortune that we endure in the disappearance of the culinary "laser," and in the still more grievous loss of the process for

making garum. Mr. Coote is touchingly pathetic on each of these subjects. Dr. Lister was scarcely less emotional. Though it was akin to the growth from which we derive the stinking assafoetida, the Cyrenaic silphium, or laser, yielded a juice which, could it be recovered, would be found inexpressibly delightful to the taste and smell of modern epicures. The apologists have no misgivings on this point, *because* the Roman chefs seized every occasion for throwing its requisite flavour into their pottages, hashes, mince-patinæ, sausages, and sauces. How could the thing so delectable to palates which relished Promulsis and Rosatum, have been otherwise than highly and naturally agreeable? But prejudice is stubborn; and men who have fled in fancy from the "irruption of intolerable smells," which Mr. Pallet's carving-knife evoked from a certain fowl to Peregrine Pickle's diversion and disgust, are slow to believe that any laserpitian spice ever possessed a *natural* pleasantness. Against the apologists, it is urged that the very way in which the Romans are known to have used their favourite herb, declares it to have been a thing of a powerfully pungent savour that could be felt and smelt above all the other half-hundred flavours requisite for the more elaborate products of the Roman cuisine. Smollett may have taken a too professional view of the subject. His judgment

may have been disturbed by his medical acquaintance with an abominably noisome extract. He may have written wildly and in utter ignorance. But it is certain that, had the beloved laser been a spice of delicate virtues, they would have been absolutely effectless in a strongly seasoned dish, compounded of several incongruous meats and as many discordant spices. In short, the general characteristics of the cookery discredit the particular ingredient.

To pass from the herb of which the moderns are said to know nothing, to a sauce about which they certainly know a good deal. The Romans had many condiments, more or less acceptable to their palates and hurtful to their digestions; but garum—or liquamen, as the same preparation was also termed—was the seasoning most largely used by the Apician chefs, and most enthusiastically extolled by Apician epicures. Amphoræ, bearing the almost sacred inscription of “*Liquamen Optimum*,” have been exhumed at Pompeii, the pleasant watering-place where the gourmands of the capital revived their jaded appetites with the sea-breeze. At home, no banquet was approved unless garum dominated the flavours of most of the dishes. It was used in soups and stews, in ragouts and sausages, in forcemeats and salmagundis of fishes. Improving most



materials, and agreeing with all, it was poured liberally on flesh, fish, game, and fowl, and hundreds of messes, each of which contained from a dozen to fifty ingredients. When he is in doubt the young whist-player plays a trump, if he can. In moments of uncertainty the Roman cook used the never-absent garum. Oil was silver, liquamen was gold. The rich and luxurious used the garum which was termed emphatically "optimum." There were inferior kinds of the sauce for the poor and thrifty.

This exquisite condiment was obtained from the intestines, gills, and blood of fishes, great and small, stirred together with salt, and exposed in an open vat to the sun, until the compound was putrid. Nothing is known as to the proportions of the several piscine ingredients; but whilst small fishes were thrown whole into the vessel, the larger fishes—such as tunny, sturgeon, and mackerel—contributed nothing to the mess, save their gills, internal parts, and juices. When putrefaction had done its work, wine and spice-herbs were added to the liquescent garbage. Finally, the liquor of this loathsome compound was strained, and sent in amphoræ from Greece to the Roman market. Something like this sauce might doubtless be obtained by an artful treatment of fetid catsup, and caviare, so far gone to the bad that the few and the many

would agree in their estimate of its virtues. Anyhow, it was darksome, saltish, biting, and beastly. But the ingenious apologists, already alluded to, regard liquamen fondly. Admitting the repulsiveness of the raw materials, and also the nauseating character of the sadly imperfect accounts of its manufacture, they are sure that, *if we knew* the whole process, there would be an end to the illiberal prejudice against the appetizing fluid. The Romans (runs the apology) were too elegant epicures to like anything that was not good; for centuries the Romans prized liquamen above all sauces; *ergo* liquamen was the best of piquant sauces, and would be in keen demand at our Pall Mall clubs, if we could only recover the secret of making it properly. "There lurks a mystery," says Mr. Coote, "in the details handed down to us of its mode of preparation." The daring experimentalist\* who shall

\* "This brings us," Mr. Coote observes with much fine feeling, "to the real problem of Roman cookery, the flavour imported by that confection," (*i.e.*, garum), "to the sauces with which it intercommunicated. Looking at this from the point of view of the kitchen, it is no other than a grave æsthetical question. If we can solve it in any way, we shall penetrate to the bottom of the Roman system. Without experiments, which will probably never be made, though Soyer vehemently desired them, we know so much as this, that the materials of the zest were fish, that salt was an adjunct, and that fermentation in the sun was the means of effecting a union more or less chemical between these well pronounced elements."—*Vide* COOTE'S "CUISINE BOURGEOISE OF ANCIENT ROME."

apprehend and penetrate this lurking mystery, will relieve Apician cookery of unmerited opprobrium, and raise the modern to the level of the ancient table.

Prejudice may cause men to condemn what is good. It may also make them admire what is bad. And of the prejudice which disposes the mind to discover nothing but goodness in things that are faulty, we cannot acquit the critics, who declare that a sauce must have been excellent because it was highly esteemed by the Apician epicures, who could relish oysters, properly dressed with pepper and vinegar, and at the same time serve them with honey.\* In another Chapter we shall see how our feudal forefathers, imitating the old Romans in this last particular, put sugar on their oysters—an atrocity that will seem almost incredible to lovers of the delicate “native!”

No impartial inquirer can peruse the Apician

\* The Apician precepts for treating oysters are significant. Here is an atrocious mixture for the improvement of our “natives,” which the Roman prized less for their delicacy of flavour than out of regard to the difficulty of procuring them: “Pepper, lovage of Lombardy, parsley, dry mint, spikenard leaves, Indian spikenard leaves, cumin (in larger quantity), *honey*, vinegar, and liquamen.” Apicius, the cook, gives another receipt for a sauce for oysters in these words: “Piper, ligusticum, ovi vitellum, acetum, liquamen, oleum et vinum, si volueris et mel addes.”

code, without seeing that the Romans were ignorant of the first principles which should always control the manufacture and administration of condiments. Not that all their sauces were altogether faulty. On the contrary, they had a few preparations that would be acceptable to palates of the present time. Oxyporon,\* the Apician sharp-sauce, for instance, was no contemptible zest, though it contained a large proportion of so coarse a spice as ginger. But when he had a supply of fairly good sauces, the Apician chef, instead of relying on any one of them, destroyed their special efficacy, by mixing them with half-a-dozen grosser preparations.

At the present date, it will not be questioned that the four chief functions of sauces are:—1. To quicken the palate to high sensibility of the distinctive flavour of material. 2. To enhance the said flavour. 3. To produce a new flavour, otherwise unattainable, by the combination of the sauce's virtues with the distinctive savour of the material.

\* Here is the receipt for oxyporon: Take two ounces of cumin, one ounce of ginger, one ounce of green rue, six scruples of salt-petre, twelve scruples of fine dates, one ounce of pepper, nine ounces of honey. Beat and mix with vinegar. This being a favourable example, the reader will know what to think of the unfavourable specimens, of Roman sauces. As Robson, the comedian, used to say of thin claret, oxyporon might go fairly well with a salad, in the absence of every kind of proper dressing.

4. To supply a natural deficiency in the texture of a material, as when a cleverly concocted sauce gives juiciness and lubricity to a dry, rough-grained viand. Of course, at seasons of privation and grievous difficulty, it devolves on the chef to disguise the evil qualities of repulsive material, or impart sapidity to insipid meats. The first Napoleon's cook signalized himself in this dismal department of his art during the retreat from Moscow. The late siege of Paris tried the inventiveness of cooks in the same field of deception. In the kitchens, also, of the cheap and rather nasty dining-places of the Palais Royal, the cook's first object is to hide the miserable deficiencies of his material with sauces that confuse whilst they tickle the palate. But, occasions of emergency excepted, such artifice is indefensible. The sauce that kills a fine natural flavour, without utilizing it nobly, is nothing else than a murderous device.

That the Roman epicures were utterly ignorant of these axioms is seen in their barbaric messes of half a hundred multifarious and hostile ingredients. In their *isicia* and *patinæ* they combined meats which, for flavour's sake, should be kept separate; and having thus brought several incongruous materials into unnatural juxtaposition, they seasoned them with an even larger number of dis-



cordant additaments ; sweet and acidulous, heating and cooling, rough and lubricous, saline and mucilaginous. In fact, their highly artificial cuisine was remarkable chiefly for its incessant and clumsy employment of artifices to disguise flavour and paralyze the taste. Instead of cherishing and emphasizing delicate flavours, the Roman chef's misdirected industry smothered them.

In one respect the competent chef of ancient Rome was above praise. If the succulency of his *plats* was excessive, and if their seasonings were preposterous, no one can deny them to have been exquisitely tender. The Roman epicure's tooth was more fastidious than his palate. He could relish what was nasty, but he revolted against what was tough. Woe and stripes, if not instant death, befell the culinary slave who sent a hard or leathery viand to a gastronomic senator's table. He was lucky if he was not dragged summarily from his kitchen to the festal chamber, and flogged in the presence of the furious Amphitryon and the guests whom he had wronged so grievously. To satisfy this paramount demand for tenderness, the chef was an unsparing user of the mincing-knife, pestle, and stew-pan. He chopped and diced, and dissected infinitesimally the materials of which his *isicia*, and *patinæ*, and *minutalia* were compounded. Having done his best with the knife and the mincing-

board, he went to work with the pestle and mortar, and pounded the muscle of fish, flesh, and fowl into a delicate pulp, that eventually appeared on the table, in lightly fried or boiled portions. The Latin epicure's delight in plates of dormice was chiefly due to the exquisite tenderness of the insipid flesh. Potted meat comes to us through the mediæval kitchens from imperial Rome. Our "minces" are the lineal descendants of the dishes which the Romans termed "minutalia," out of regard to the minute dissection of the viands employed for their composition.

The Roman cuisine, be it also observed, had a vegetable basis. The numerous pottages in which the Latin epicures delighted were made chiefly of prepared grain and pot-herbs, seasoned with wine and sauces to the taste. Barley, wheat, rice, peas, beans, gourds, were all used for the manufacture of the highly nutritive soups, which were often enriched with pulp of pounded meat, and morsels of tenderly stewed flesh, but never failed to exhibit their vegetable foundation. Often these porridges were sweetened with honey, and sharpened with liquamen. Some of the lighter Roman pottages resembled closely the thin vegetable soups of the modern Lenten table. But none of them are comparable with the clear gravy soups of the nineteenth century. The Roman cared little for the pure

flavour of meat-juice, though he employed it sparingly in his meretricious sauces. A soup, chiefly excellent for preserving the distinctive taste of the natural viand, was no delicacy to his undiscerning palate.

Relishing his joints of baked and boiled meat, and his joints cooked by both processes, his broiled collops served with liquamen and spices, and large birds cooked whole, the Roman gourmand was especially particular about his "made dishes," consisting chiefly of minced and pounded meats. These *isicia*, *patinæ*, and *minutalia* were sometimes made of a dozen or more different species of flesh; but for the simplest *plats* a single meat and numerous seasonings were sufficient. Meat or corn paste entered into the composition of several of them.

The *Patina Apiciana*, one of the costliest and most elegant of these preparations, was an achievement that doubtless made its inventor famous in the kitchens of his period. To produce this dainty, the chef took gobbets of stewed sow's udder, flesh of several fishes, meat of chickens and other young things, a score or so *beccaficoes*, as many stewed breasts of thrushes, and whatever other meats appeared to him to be especially good (*et quæcunque optima fuerint.*) The *beccaficoes* excepted, he

minced these ingredients minutely. His next care was to mix raw eggs with oil, season the mixture with triturated pepper and lovage, and pour liquamen, oil, wine, and sweet wine into it. This compound having been boiled and thickened with frumenty, it received the minced stuff and beccaficoes. The entire composition having been boiled thoroughly, it was poured upon layers of peppered pine-apple, each layer of the stew-laden fruit being divided from the layer above it by a thin wafer biscuit. A biscuit of the same kind was broken into small pieces and sprinkled on the top layer, which was also lightly peppered. The only one of the several ingredients of a feaster's portion of this dish that retained its natural taste, or had any distinctive flavour, was the beccafico, which was of course a delicious surprise.

Haggis, as the Scotch term it, was a favourite preparation with Romans; but, instead of mincing the flesh used for this dish, they as often as not brayed it in a mortar, with liquamen and seasonings, till it became a soft pulp. The usual farinaceous ingredient of the Roman haggis was frumenty; but often no grain was employed. The Apician pork-haggis—esteemed above all other compositions of the same kind—was a boiled pig's stomach filled with fry and brain, raw eggs, and pine-apple, beaten

into a pulp, and treated with the never absent sauces and seasonings.

The same epicures showed their nice appreciation of the chicken's delicate flavour in the following process. Having boned the fowl, they first minced the flesh, and then brayed it with liquamen in a mortar to a pulp. Farinaceous ingredients were added ; and when the composition had been spiced with pepper and other strong condiments, it was boiled or fried, and sent to table in wine-sauce. Any insipid meat, or piece of pliant leather would have done as well for this mess, as the tender and tasteful flesh of a pullet.

The Romans were more reasonable in their treatment of vegetables, though they used the mincing knife far too freely in preparing them. Great were their pains to impart a more than natural greenness to their pot-herbs: a laudable aim, though, in achieving it, they often sacrificed flavour to colour by a too liberal employment of nitre. "Omne olus," says the author of the '*De Arte Coquinariâ*,' "*smaragdinum fiet, si cum nitro coquatur.*"

Respecting the sweetmeats and prepared fruits of the Roman table, there is no need to speak fully in the present Chapter. It may, however, be remarked that the confectioners and other culinary specialists of ancient Rome were no less ingenious



and fantastic than the general practitioners of cookery. Enough for the present of the Apician method, to which it will be necessary to refer in subsequent chapters for purposes of illustration and comparison.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE FORME OF CURY.

“Many of the receipts contained in the ‘Forme of Cury,’ are indeed, as unintelligible to a modern, as the hieroglyphics of an Egyptian pillar; but such as we do understand, are not calculated to prejudice us in favour of the culinary art of the fourteenth century. The combination of such a variety of articles in the formation of one dish would produce an effect very unpleasant to a palate of this day, and the quantity of hot spices would now be relished only by those most accustomed to the high-seasoned dishes of the East and West Indies.”—*Vide* WARNER’S INTRODUCTION TO THE “ANTIQUITADES CULINARIAE.”

THE cuisine, at which we have been glancing, was the cookery which the Romans practised at home and conveyed to their remotest provinces. For the benefits thus extended to them, the imperial dependencies paid with materials for the development of gastronomy in the luxurious metropolis. Whilst she procured liquamen from Greece, and her choicest spices from Asia, Rome obtained her fattest and juiciest oysters in the Northern Island whose aborigines she had taught to make soups and ragouts, *i.e.*, dishes of “*rare goût*.”

A system that took root and flourished in whatever soil it was planted, this cookery survived the

power which carried it to every region of the Roman world. Its precepts were obeyed by races ignorant of its history, and by generations to whom the very name of its originators was unknown. Alike acceptable to Celt and Teuton, it gratified the primæval inhabitants of Northern Gaul and their Germanic conquerors. The equally daring and pliant Scandinavians, who assumed the name and customs of the Franks, found it on their adopted soil, and with a fine superiority to prejudice they acquired a taste for Latin dishes, whilst they learnt to speak a variety of the Latin tongue.

Of course this marvellous diffusion of Latin gastronomy was not effected with uniform ease and quickness. It must have stirred local jealousies, and encountered opposition in rude peoples wedded to their less troublesome modes of preparing food. Just as our ancestors of a later period stubbornly resisted the introduction of Justinian law, and with suspicious jealousy limited its operation to "some particular cases and some particular courts," when they had reluctantly submitted to its requirements "on account of some peculiar propriety," it must have been that Apician law found contemptuous deriders and resolute opponents amongst the Celtic and German communities of Roman Britain. But slowly undermining obstacles which she could not carry by *coups de main*, Latin cookery in course

of time soothing the fretful animosities of the Briton, and warming the blood of the sluggish Teuton, became equally dear to both elements of the populace. She may have languished on this soil after the Roman retirement. She may have pined for want of competent professors and intelligent patrons. She may have subsequently derived a sorely needed stimulus from the luxurious tastes of the Norman conquerors. But it is absurd to suppose that she was powerless to retain the hearts which she had won completely; and that the withdrawal of the Southern legions was a signal for her ignominious ejection from the thousands of kitchens which had for generations submitted to her genial sway, and from the thousands of homes which depended upon her for their chief enjoyments, if not for their actual sustenance.

The fare which had nourished the Norman in France was fare of Roman invention, and in its chief principles and the majority of its details was the same good cheer that had for centuries smoked on Saxon boards. Had the case been otherwise, the Conqueror would perhaps have endeavoured to force his food as well as his language down the throats of the conquered people. But circumstances afforded him neither pretext nor opportunity for such a display of insolence. Though he might deride the Saxon menus for their want of tastefulness and variety,

and scorn the Saxon cooks for their unskilfulness, he could not deny that the ordinary broths, brewets, and hashes of the subjugated Angles were identical in material, consistency, and seasoning with the common pottages, stews, and hotchpots of his own people.

Norman influence on our mediæval cookery has been greatly exaggerated by the several romantic writers and antiquaries who have too hastily argued from insufficient data that all dishes, bearing names of Norman-French etymology, were things of Norman invention. Because the French intruders distinguished half-a-dozen meats by Norman names, it has been inferred that the viands were peculiar to the people who thus styled them with words of Latin derivation. The misleading teachers have gone yet further. Observing that, whilst the dead meats were called by French names at French tables, the living animals were known to the Saxons by Saxon names, they have argued that, whilst the Normans were the sole eaters of the meats, the Saxons were the only tenders of the animals. Saxon serfs drove *oxen*, in order that Norman gentry might have *beef*. The flesh of calves was only seen on the tables where it bore a French designation. The Norman nobles ate pork at their pleasure; it was enough for Saxon slaves to be *swine*-herds.

Sir Walter Scott was not the originator of this



foolish theory; but in a careless moment he adopted it in a passage remembered by every reader of "Ivanhoe." After remarking to Gurth, the dull swine-herd, that swine are Saxons during life, and Normans when they have passed through the butcher's hands, Wamba, the Saxon jester of a Saxon household, explains his miserable witticism step by step. "And pork, I think, is good Norman-French," the wit observes to the witless serf; "and so when the brute lives, and is in the charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman, and is called pork, when she is carried to the castle-hall to feast among the nobles: what dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?" Gurth admits it to be "too true doctrine," though coming from a fool's mouth. Encouraged by his comrade's approval, Wamba continues, "Nay, I can tell you more; there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner: he is a Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment." Again the Saxon Gurth sees his com-

panion's "points," and assents to the smart talker's "too true doctrine."

Perhaps Wamba's knowledge of Norman-French is not inappropriate to a jester, whose business it was to observe social fashions and turn them to fun. The Saxon fool—albeit the fool of a Saxon lord, who smarted under the insolence and detested the ways of the French intruders—may not be wise in Norman matters, beyond the requirements of his vocation. But it is strange that stupid Gurth, the Saxon swine-herd of the Saxon proprietor, should have known enough Norman-French to catch Wamba's philological points. Whence came this familiarity with Norman terms to the stupid serf who, for fear of a flogging, would not have dared to utter one of them in his master's hearing? And how came he to approve so cordially the fool's assertion that, on becoming matters of enjoyment, ox-flesh, calf's-flesh, and swine's-flesh were known only by Norman words? Dullard though he was, he must have known that swine's-flesh was consumed daily at the board of his irascible lord, who would have flushed with rage and sworn terribly on hearing any Saxon guest call it "pork." Gurth, we may be sure, had personal experience of the flavour of swine's-flesh; and Wamba often received a cut of swine's brawn in payment for a saucy speech. Both of them knew that ox-flesh and

calf's-flesh were commonly served under Saxon names to their masters' friends.

To argue that the Saxons never ate bread because the Normans called it by a French name; or to insist that the Saxons were no equestrians because *cheval* is French for a horse, and the Norman knights were *chivalric* persons, would not be more absurd than to infer from the Norman names of meats and dishes that the same viands never smoked on the tables of the vanquished race. Indeed, were it not for Scott's name, and the results of his influence, we would give neither consideration nor ridicule to the arguments against Saxon cookery, that depend altogether on a hasty survey of the nomenclature of the Anglo-Norman cuisine. But, strangely enough, the flimsiest page of a charming novel has been mistaken for good history, and placed in books of serious instruction. The words put (be it remembered, in justice to the great novelist) into the lips of a merry fool have been accepted at Gurth's valuation by men who were scribes instead of swineherds. And having thus adopted as "but too true doctrine" what they should have only smiled at as a wild suggestion, the solemn reproducers of a piquant blunder assure our studious children that the Saxons of the twelfth century were clearly no eaters of swine's flesh, *because* the Normans called it "pork."

Our sources of information respecting the cookery of our forefathers, from the Norman conquest to the Reformation, are various and abundant. They are, moreover, so precise that no uncertainty covers any greatly important question about the English cuisine during this long period. They comprise collections of receipts, menus of famous feasts, admonitions to culinary apprentices, hints to gentle servitors, ceremonious orders for the table, and lists of the materials consumed at particular banquets. Some of the older and more important of these multifarious rules and records may be found in Warner's "Antiquitates Culinariæ," that, together with curious tracts, and some illustrative notes of considerable value, contains the "Forme of Cury," which the Reverend Samuel Pegge edited with a sufficient glossary, in 1780, eleven years before the appearance of the Reverend Richard Warner's large and more ambitious publication.

Compiled in days when women practised medicine, and cookery was an art regularly followed for honour and profit by reverend physicians of the sterner sex, the "Forme of Cury" was produced by the principal cooks of that "best and royalest viander of all Christian kings," Richard the Second. The concise language of an old manuscript certifies that these compilers were "the *chef* maister cokes of Kyng Richard," and that their literary work was

done "by assent and argument of maisters of phisik and philosophie that dwellid in his court." The former of which announcements indicates a Norman source for the familiar French title of a supreme cook, whilst the latter furnishes evidence of the close connection of the culinary and medical arts in feudal times. If our old surgeons were barbers, our ancient physicians were cooks. Nor need the college in Trafalgar Square blush to acknowledge that the mediæval doctors of the highest professional quality and status concerned themselves with the principles and details of an art which, if not an actual department of medicine, is so needful for health, and so nearly related to remedial science, that no sagacious physician can affect to disdain, or afford to neglect it.

Like all works of its kind, this mediæval "Guide for Cooks and Housewives" gives the results of several ages of culinary enterprise. Compiled some three hundred and twenty-five years after the Conquest, it contains receipts for dishes that were novelties in the days of the Plantagenets, and receipts for hashes that smoked on the table of the Conqueror. It gives directions also for the preparation of messes which cautious criticism assigns confidently to Saxon influence. For the most part its nomenclature is Norman ; but, scattered amongst the culinary terms that declare the French lineage of



the majority of the dishes, the reader comes upon names whose Saxon derivation intimates that the epicures of the fourteenth century were not insensible to the merits of savoury compounds, known in England long before the battle of Hastings. The second Richard's cooks teach the apprentice to make broths, brewets, and chewets, three elastic terms that may, in fact, be said to comprehend the greater part of what was appetizing and nutritious in the Plantagenet cuisine. If the "potages," "mortrews," and "vyaundes" of the compilation came hither from ancient Rome through Normandy, a Saxon descent may be claimed for compositions of the same design and merit.

Another noteworthy feature of "The Forme of Cury," is its respectful mention of cheap and homely dishes, adapted to the narrow means of yeomen and artisans, rather than to the fastidious palates of princes. Injustice is done to the compilers when their work is said to exhibit only the culinary condition of the court, without throwing light into the larders and cupboards of humble dwellings. Most of their receipts are for the kitchens of the prosperous. Some of them are directions for the manufacture of delicacies that were even too costly for habitual consumption at rich men's tables. But, whilst providing good cheer for court-revels and baronial festivities, they

give rules for cooking beans and bacon, pea-soup, milk-pottage, beef-hotchpotch, and gourd-pie. A book for the court and courtiers, in respect to its dainties, the "Forme" was also a treatise for the populace, in respect to its receipts for the homely fare which was set before ordinary men under their own roofs, and also before the servants and inferior visitors of royal households.

Whether they came to Plantagenet tables through a Saxon channel, or by way of Normandy, the dishes of our forefathers, of the fourteenth century, are referable to the same ancient source. The cuisine of feudal England was Roman\* in its

\* Here are some of the most obvious points of resemblance, or rather proofs of identity, in the Roman and mediæval schools of cookery. 1. The large use of frumenty, or other prepared corn, in broths, stews, and hotch-potches. 2. The continual use of the pot, and the less frequent employment of the spit. N.B.—The spit and gridiron were more serviceable in the Roman than in the old English kitchen. 3. The practice of combining in stews and "made dishes" several meats of incongruous flavours. 4. The incessant use of knife and block, pestle and mortar, for mincing and pounding meats. 5. The practice of roasting slightly before boiling, and of boiling before roasting. 6. The lavish exhibition of strong spices, so as to smother the natural flavours of the seasoned meats. 7. The complete ignorance of the prime functions of sauce. 8. The use of saffron, a spice used sparingly by the Romans, and inordinately by the mediævalists, which has altogether disappeared from the modern kitchen. 9. The similarity, amounting almost to identity, of some of the Roman stews and old English hotch-potches. 10. The imaginative predilection shown in the preference of the greater fowl and fish over the smaller, and of unpalatable birds of fine plumage over delicate

principles and details. No one will question this statement, after studying the Apician "Art of Cookery," and comparing it with "Forme of Cury." In both works we see the same materials and processes, the same barbarous treatment of delicate viands with overpowering sauces, and the same delight in messes of multifarious and incongruous ingredients. Some of the choicest compositions of the modern repertory may be found in the ancient collection of receipts, with scarcely the addition of a material or the substitution of a spice. Not, of course, that the two schools of cookery were precisely the same. For instance, the mediævalists were less lavish users of oil than their southern precursors; they had recourse to the spit less frequently, and to the pot even more often than the old Romans; and in default of any such noisome

birds of less attractive feather. The Romans feasted on the parrot, the flamingo, and the peacock, serving the last in his hackel. The old English also delighted in the peacock served thus showily. The swan, also, a bird in no great request with modern gourmands, was prized highly by both Romans and English. Just as the ancients relished their "stinking birds," our ancestors devoured eagerly bustards, cranes, and herons. 11. The taste for such execrable preparations as roast lobster and sweetened oysters. The Romans served our "natives" in honey, the mediævalists dished them in sugar-syrup as well as honey. 12. The extravagant use of honey in sauces for meats. 13. The multifariousness of ingredients in made dishes. 14. The mediæval broths, brewets, and mortrews were the pultes, patinæ, and minutalia of the more ancient cuisine.

condiment as *garum*, they were spendthrifts and madmen with ginger, cinnamon, cubebs, and other stimulating flavours, which the ancients used less immoderately, or neglected altogether.

Like the Roman cuisine, mediæval cookery had a vegetable basis. Of its half-hundred or so of soups, several consisted altogether of water thickened with boiled *frumenty*, rice, or pulse, flavoured with pot-herbs, and seasoned with common spices. In this way, also, the mediævalists concocted bean-soup, pea-soup, turnip-soup, cabbage-soup, parsnip-soup, skirret-soup, herb-soup, gourd-pottage, rice-pottage. These thinner broths were sometimes enriched with the liquor of stewed meat or minced viands, but the vegetable dominated over all other ingredients. So also their thicker brewets and stews—messes less substantial than hotch-potches, and more satisfying than the lighter soups—were thickened with bread, *frumenty*, oatmeal, prepared barley, rice, and products of the garden. The men of feudal England were copious takers of soup; and whilst some of their soups were meat and drink for the ravenous bellies of famished soldiers, others were delicate enough to please a modern epicure. Their Humble-soup, and Pig-soup, and Roe-broth may be named as examples of the former sort. Their Egg-soup and Lark-soup were favourable specimens of the daintier

preparations. Courtiers could appreciate a pottage of small birds boiled in almond broth, flavoured with onions, pellitory, and salt, and enriched with lard. Yeomen smacked their lips over steaming bowls of strongly seasoned "*Perrey* of peson," *i.e.*, the *purée* of the modern family-table. But the mediæval chefs were even happier in their fish-soups than their flesh-pottages. Skilfully prepared, their eel-broths and sole-broths would extort praise from the most fastidious *gourmets* of the present day. Nor should their muscle-broths and oyster-soups be passed over without commendation. One of their oyster-pottages was execrably overcharged with ginger, *sugar*, and mace. "Oysters in Cynee," on the contrary, was a preparation of high merit, if not of genius. But the grand fault of most of their soups was a multifariousness of materials and seasonings, resulting in confusion of flavours and torpor of the palate. The same objection must be made against their more elaborate mortrews and hotch-potches.

The magnificent sides of venison and barons of beef that the popular imagination delights to place before mediæval feasters, seldom or never appeared on the tables of the Plantagenets. When they did not satisfy their hunger with pottages and bread, our mediæval ancestors usually found their more substantial nutriment in hashes, hotch-potches, fine



minces, pies, and viands pounded with the pestle and mortar to a pulp.\* The grander creatures of the stall and chase were served in gobbets, dices, or still more minute pieces. The smaller animals were ordinarily prepared in the same manner, with an unsparing use of the chopper, mincing-knife, and pestle.

The same was the case with their noblest birds and royal fish. The peacock was sometimes cooked whole; but at feasts, where the gorgeous bird was

\* Mortrews, a numerous class of made dishes, derived their name from the *mortarium* in which their meats were beaten and ground to pulp. "Hack it small," "dice it," are the Forme's directions for preparing viands. The gobbet—the largest piece of meat served in hash or soup—was about the size of a man's thumb. A gobbet (abbreviated to "gob,") as large as two thumbs, was a thing for remark. Remember the nursery rhyme legend of King Arthur's housekeeping:

"When good King Arthur ruled the land  
He ruled it like a king;  
He stole three pecks of barley meal,  
To make a black pudding.

"A black pudding the king did make,  
He stuffed it well with plums,  
And in it put great "gobs" of fat  
As big as my two thumbs.

"The king and queen did eat thereof,  
And noblemen beside,  
And what they could not eat that day,  
The queen next morning fried."

Whatever his period, the writer of this charming doggerel had a just notion of a nobly big gobbet.

brought to table in its plumage, its wholeness was often only apparent, the meat having been dissected by the carver, and then restored to the interior of the "hackel." The same remarks are applicable to the crane, the swan, the heron, and other large fowl, which, though sometimes served whole, were often broken into hashes, and were occasionally brought upon the board in pieces, even when for pictorial effect they were offered with the appearance of entirety. The sturgeon, honoured for its size, was usually put upon the board in fragments. "He schal," says the 'Forme of Cury,' "be shorn in besys, and stepyd over night, and sodyn longe as flesh : and he schal be etyn in vinegar." Capons, chickens, geese, pheasants, partridges, pigeons, and smaller birds were often brought to table whole, and divided artistically by expert carvers, but they were much more often served to the hungry in pies, hashes, mortrews, and thick stews. Where the mediæval epicure had one joint, he had twenty "made dishes;" for every whole creature that charmed his sight, there were a dozen hotch-potches to gratify his nostrils with savoury steam. In short, the mediæval cuisine consisted chiefly of soups and spoon-meats. The exceptions to this rule were very few. The collars and sides of brawn, which showed out so grandly amongst the broth-pots and bowls of mortrew, were, in fact, a kind of

cold soup. The cold boar's head, an article of grotesque garniture rather than a *pièce de résistance*, afforded a meat that could be handled conveniently in thick wedge-like slices by eaters unprovided with forks. The fingers also could deal aptly with the thick portions of the smaller game distributed by professional carvers. But, in times prior to the introduction of the fork, spoon-meats were naturally in vogue; the nice eater avoiding such dishes as he could not "put away" with a mannerly employment of his fingers and solitary utensil.

Like his Roman forerunners, the mediæval epicure lost his temper when his food was not sufficiently tender. An apocryphal story records how William the Conqueror, enraged by the toughness of a half-roasted crane, was on the point of striking his favourite and prime kitchener, William Fitz-Osborne, when Eudo, the courtly dapifer, saved his fellow-servant from the shameful blow. The anecdote may be false with regard to Dr. Freeman's hero, but it doubtless had a truthful foundation in the anger of some princely gourmand suffering under a cook's incompetence. The vianders of olden time must have been often disappointed by the texture of viands taken from creatures whose size had occasioned unreasonable hopes of enjoyment. Notice has already been taken of the principal means employed by the mediævalists to ensure tenderness;

but it should be also observed that for the attainment of this end they, like the Romans, prepared meat for the spit by parboiling it, and also roasted flesh lightly before committing it to the boiler.

The “sweets,” as they are now-a-days familiarly termed, of the mediæval table, were numerous. They comprised jellies, fruit puddings, fruit tarts, mashies of fruits, blanc-mange of pounded chicken and rose-leaves, divers kinds of mince-pie, almond cakes, milk puddings, similar to the firm custards of the present time, and a variety of devices, grand or minute, manufactured with honey and sugar; but most of these delicacies reveal the bluntness of taste that is displayed in the preparations of meat. No palate with a gust for the singular flavour of quinces would wish them to be stewed, after the “Forme’s” fashion, with lard, honey, yolks of eggs, almond milk, saffron, ginger, pepper, and other strong spices. The fruit of the mediæval mulberry mess can scarcely have been rendered more agreeable by the “strong powder” (a compound of hot spices), salt, sugar, and yolks of eggs beaten into the mash, whose redness was heightened by alkanet. Appulmoy—a favourite mediæval preparation of apples—resembles some of our modern compositions in its principal materials—apples, honey, and rice; but no confectioner of this period would think of seasoning

such a pudding with ginger, pepper, mace, and salt. Another of the “Forme’s” choicest fruit-messes was Rosee, made by this receipt:—“Take thyk mylke as to fore welled. Cast thereto sugar, a gode porcion pynes (*i.e.* mulberries), dates ymynced, canel, and powder gynger, and seeth it, and alye it with floers of white rosis, and floer of rys. Cole it and messe it forth. If thou wilt, instede of almonde mylke, take swete cremes of kyne.” Petals of roses have fallen out of culinary use in England; but so late as the last century, our people put them into tarts, salads, and fruit stews. The practice was of Roman origin.\*

Except that they were often seasoned in a fashion offensive to the modern palate, the mediæval bread-puddings, rice-puddings, and standing custards of milk and eggs differed in no important respect from

\* The Apician “*patina de rosis*” was a mortrew of rose leaves, brain, and eggs, beaten up with liquamen, pepper, and wine, and fried lightly. Rosee, or rose mortrew, was made in Old England by this receipt: “Take the flowris of rosys, and wash them well in water, and then take almonds, and temper them and seethe them, and take flesh of capons or of hens, and hack it small, and then bray them well in a mortar, and then do it in the rose, so that the flesh accord with the milk, and so that the meat be chargeaunt; and after do it to fire to boyle, and do thereto sugar and saffron, and it be well coloured and rosy of leaves.” Akin to the rose-mortrews were the *blanc-mange* mortrews made of pounded chicken, ground rice, pounded almonds, or almond-creme. Of course they were stiff, sometimes they were coloured with saffron, in which case, however, they were still called *blanc-mange*.



our familiar preparations of the same kind. The same may be said of the old English pancakes, and fritters of sliced fruits clothed with batter. The plum-pudding of our Christmas dinners, fondly regarded by popular fancy as the ancientest compound of "true Old English" fare, is a comparatively modern invention. No older than the Restoration, it did not altogether supersede plum-porridge (a mess of unquestionably mediæval descent) before the close of the last century. But we find in the "Forme," receipts for one or two puddings made with raisins, figs, eggs, honey, wine, and bread fried in grease, which may, at least, be said to have furnished culinary inventors with the first rude notion of an English plum-pudding.

Mince-meat and mince-pies are articles of Christmas fare still made very much after the fashion of the mediævalists, who delighted to combine dried fruits and meats in chopt messes. The Plantagenet epicures had crustards or standing pies of divers kinds—crustards of venison, birds, pork; crustards of fish; and crustards of fruit. These preparations had another familiar name, the grander being tarts, and the smaller tartlets. And of these pies with a designation, respecting which more will be said hereafter, none were more popular than such as contained in their "cofyns," or "traps" of paste, a mixture of apples, spices, figs, raisins, and pears,

chopt together, or beaten into a pulp with the pestle and mortar. "For to make tartys in applis," say Richard the Second's chief master-cook "take gode applys, and gode spycis, and figgs, and reysons, and perys, and wan they are wel ybrayed, colore wyth saffron well; and do yt in a cofyn, and do yt forth to bake wel." Lenten tarts and tartlets contained fish pulled to pieces, or shred, amongst the sweet ingredients. So also meat tarts for festal seasons contained minced or shred flesh together with the fruits and sweeter elements of modern "minced meat." Like the housekeepers of our time, mediæval cooks kept stocks of minced fruits, such as their "Fygee" and "Dates in Compost," in "earthen vessels ready for use."

Enough has been said in this general survey of old English cookery to satisfy the ordinary reader that, whilst it possessed the redeeming features, it retained the most vicious practices of the Apician school, from which it was derived, or, rather, of which it was only a modern period. In respect to its chief aims, tenderness and succulency,\* it was

\* To impart to their hashes and "gallimawfreys," the richness and lubricity which the old English epicures desired even more than tenderness, the Plantagenet cooks were lavish exhibitors of fat, oil, and lard. Olive-oil was in great request with them, lard entered into the composition of most of their meat-messes, and also into many of their preparations of fruit. They were, however, sparing

triumphant. With regard to flavours, it achieved scarcely anything but confusion. Pegge was not unjust, when he remarked of it contemptuously, "But after all the avysement of physicians and philosophers, its processes do not appear by any means to be well calculated for the benefit of recipients, but rather inimical to them. Many of them are such strange and heterogeneous compositions, mere olios and gallimawfreys, that they seem removed as far as possible from the intention of contributing to health; indeed the messes are so redundant and complex, that in regard to herbs, no less than ten are used, where we should now be content with two or three." The particular receipt to which the editor pointed in demonstration of this last remark, is one for a good broth. Given in modern spelling, the direction runs thus: "Take borage, colewort, bugloss, parsley, beet-root, orach, avens, violets, savory, fennel, and when they are boiled, press them well small, cast them

users of butter and cheese, as culinary instruments and ingredients, at least in comparison with their successors of modern England. The Norman cheese, which took its special name from Rouen was their most highly esteemed cheese. Though it never went out of general use, as an agreeable lubricator of bread, from the time of the early Saxons, butter seems to have fallen out of *fashion* after the Norman conquest. Anyhow it was sparingly used in the processes of the best kitchens of strictly feudal England.

in good broth, and seethe them and serve them forth."

In this undiscerning use of sauce-herbs, the mediæval followed the example of the Apician cooks. The *farced grewels* of the old English housewives were, as Mr. Coote observes, the savoury *pultes* of the Roman ancients. It should, also, be borne in mind that the herbs, administered so freely, were given medicinally, as well as for flavour. In times when physicians were operative cooks, and epicures went to the same professors for physic and food, a culinary receipt was often a remedial prescription. Each of the herbs of the last given receipt either had, or was supposed to have, curative virtues; and it was committed to the broth out of regard for the consumer's health. To catch the precise significance and "lurking mystery" of each of the several herbs thrown into the same mess by the cooks of the olden time, the special student should have recourse to the "Herbals," which show why the herb-doctors of the same period put as many of the same ingredients into their strictly medical potions and conserves. The same quackery which invented medical justifications of the Roman method of flavouring dishes, became a barrier to culinary advancement. Forbidding experiments and deriding novelties, it fostered a superstitious

reverence for bad cookery, and gave an evil name to gastronomic "free thought." Taste could not assert its rights, so long as all the wise men and wise women of the country recommended, for health's sake, what was distasteful.



## CHAPTER VI.

## CULINARY COLOURISTS.

"July 23, 1670. This is in Saffron Walden parish, famous for that useful plant, with which all the country is covered."—*Vide* JOHN EVELYN'S "DIARY."

"The flower consisteth of six small blew leaves tending to purple, having in the middle many very small yellow strings and threads; among which are two, three, or more thicke fat chives of a fierie colour, somewhat reddish, of a strong smell when they be dried, which doth stuffe and trouble the head. . . . The chives steeped in water serve to illumine or (as we say) limne pictures and imagerie, and also to colour meats and confections."—*Vide* GERARDE'S "HERBAL."

"Saffron killeth moths if it be sowed in paper bags verie thin, and laid up in presses amongst tapistrie or apparell."—*Vide* HARRISON'S INTRODUCTION TO HOLINSHED'S "CHRONICLES."

*Autolycus.* . . . I must have saffron to colour the warden pies.—*Vide* "WINTER'S TALE."

"Croaker: One who croaks or grumbles."—*Vide* WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY.

"Don't be a croaker."—OLD SAYING.

IN arranging their tables, and preparing their festal halls, the Old English were studious of pictorial effect. Norman love of display was conspicuous in the banqueting-chamber; and long after the French intruders had adopted the Saxon tongue, and been blended with the English race, their modes of exercising hospitality were preserved, even to minute details, by a people jealously reverential of ancient usage. Judged by modern canons,

the mediæval entertainments were deficient in elegance and refinement; but in courtly life they never wanted the particular kinds of splendour and sumptuous brilliancy congenial to feudal taste.

The drapery of the board was abundant, fine, and delicately white; and whilst the walls of the feasting-room were richly draped with tapestries and banners of gaudy silk, the ceiling was adorned with festoons of flowers, after the fashion of the Romans, whose honourable sentiment forbade the guest to blab to the world words spoken indiscreetly "under the rose." Gentle servitors, men of stately presence, or slight pages with saucy faces and pert tongues, moved to and fro, bravely clad in liveries which the cadet of the noblest houses were proud to wear. Nor was the table devoid of colour and picturesqueness. Every course comprised a fantastic "subtlety," whose ingeniously contrived figures, typical embellishments, and quaint legend recalled an antique story or enforced a wholesome maxim. The boar's-head grinned hideously in the middle of the board; or perhaps the place of honour was occupied by a peacock in its plumage. The spaces between the chief dishes offered plates of fruit, or trays of sweetmeats to the idle hand; and as the spectator surveyed the profusely laden board, he could not fail to observe the contrast of the

rich or vivid colours, which culinary artifice had given to the "made dishes."

Brilliant colourists, the mediæval chefs seized the lessons of the missal-painters, and delighted the eye with chromatic effects, that were equally daring and felicitous. On their subtleties, and other stupendous pieces of confectionery, gilded leaves glowed richly beneath sprays of silver. Some of their "made dishes" were red, others crimson; some were of vermilion brightness, and some of delicate carmine tint. For these hues they were indebted chiefly to red sanders, alkanet, mulberry-juice, and the colouring particles of blood. Throwing in these vivid hues with masterly boldness, they were also prodigal of yellow, from the faintest amber to the deepest orange. It was their favourite colour, and was conspicuous in breads and cakes, pottages and hashes, brewets and twists of pastry. Two-thirds of their dishes were thus enriched to the eye, with the various tints of a dye which they obtained from the bright petals of a delicate flower, whose story, beginning in fable and ending in homeliest prose, is so strange and whimsical as to merit especial notice in the annals of Good Cheer.

When Crocus, the beloved friend of Smilax, fell beneath Mercury's murderous quoit, the blood which dripped from the wounded boy moistened the turf,

which, after his death, brought forth a bell-shaped blue flower with reddish-yellow stigmata—the *Crocus Sativus* of botanists. Poetry declared that the lad was changed to a saffron plant. Prose admitted that the flower abounded on the ground where he was said to have received his death-blow. Scepticism remarked that probably the plant had grown there long before the incident, whatever it was, that occasioned the fable. One of the utterers of this sceptical sentiment was an Elizabethan scholar, William Harrison, author of the Introduction to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, who remarked quaintly, "A certain yong gentleman called Crocus went to playe at coits in the field with Mercurie, and being heedlesse of himselfe, Mercurie's coit happened by mishap to hit him on the head, whereby he received a wound that yer long killed him altogither, to the great discomfort of his friends. Finallie, in the place where he bled, saffron was found to grow, whereupon the people seeing the colour of the chive as it stood, (although I doubt not it grew there long before), adjudged it to come of the blood of Crocus, and therefore they gave it his name."

Attracted by the colour and smell of the three fat chives, "verie red and pleasant to behold," and the fine yellow filaments which glowed at the bottom of the deep blue cup, the ancients observed them carefully. It was found that they were agreeable

to smell and taste,\* as well as cheering to the eye. They were supposed to possess medicinal virtues. It was certain that they yielded a pigment serviceable to artists in colour. Henceforth the chives and tendrils were gathered and pressed into yellow cakes, that were sent to distant lands for divers ends. Used as a dye, they gave an orange hue to silk, wool, and linen. Apothecaries administered them to the sick. Cooks put them into their confections. Ladies were indebted to them for the hair-wash which, correcting Nature's error, gave them golden hair. In the Roman cuisine it was used moderately, as the Apician precepts demonstrate, But the "Forme" shows that the cooks of Old

\* "What in the ancient use of saffron is most discordant with our present taste, is the employing it as a perfume. Not only were halls, theatres, and courts, through which one wished to diffuse an agreeable smell, strewed with this plant, but it entered into the composition of many spirituous extracts, which retained the same scent; and these costly smelling waters were often made to flow in small streams, which spread about their much admired odour. Luxurious people even moistened or filled with them all those things with which they were most desirous of surprising their guests in an agreeable manner, or with which they ornamented their apartments. From saffron, with the addition of wax and other ingredients, the Greeks as well as the Romans prepared also scented salves, which they used in the same manner as our ancestors their balsams. . . . That saffron was as much employed in seasoning dishes as for a perfume, appears from the oldest work on cookery which has been handed down to us, and which is ascribed to Apicius."—*Vide* JOHN BECKMANN'S "HISTORY OF INVENTIONS."



England were squanderers of the aromatic pigment. Their delight in the colour was a passion—almost a madness. Broths, thick soups, hashes, stews, bread, pastry, fruit-mashes, mortrews, standing-brewets and puddings were all “yellowed” up to lemon-tint or orange-tint with the favourite dye, which was, also, prized as much for its remedial excellence as for its colouring powers.

Esteemed above all other spices,\* notwithstanding the comparative mildness of its peculiar flavour, it was the Prince of Herbal Medicaments. It was good for maladies of the breast, lungs, stomach, liver. It was of marvellous efficacy in affections of the eyes, ears, and joints. Taken in potions it purified the blood, and drove blotches and pimples from the skin. Singularly beneficial in all the ailments to which women are especially liable, it was in high request with the fair sex. Bridal cakes were always deeply coloured with it; women with newly-born infants in their arms would drink no fluid that was not tinctured with it; and on “thanksgiving-day,” whilst the young mother ate little but saffron-dyed cake, her gossips consumed whole pounds of the

\* The spices of the old English cuisine were cinnamon (never mentioned by Apicius) mace, cloves, galyngale (the long-rooted cyperus), pepper, (from the East Indies *via* Venice and Genoa), ginger, cubebs, cardamours, nutmegs, carraway, and two compound powders, powder-fort and powder-douce, analagous to modern curry-powder. Hence saffron was the mildest of the spices *in taste*.

same virtuous food. Given in liniments, saffron would dissipate tumours; taken in strong drink after an accident it helped the sufferer's fractured bones to re-unite. It had the most contradictory qualities, for it both prevented and provoked drunkenness. Given in proper proportion it deprived wine of its dangerous power over the nerves; but taken indiscreetly it put the toper at the mercy of vinous devils. The feaster, who returned sober from a drinking-bout, attributed the steadiness of his legs to his discretion in taking “just the right amount of saffron.” If he were carried home on a stretcher, his misadventure was referred to the “saffron,” instead of the “salmon.” Lastly, saffron was an effectual preservative against the plague. One of the shrewdest medical practitioners of Queen Elizabeth's London—John Gerarde, the laborious naturalist and author of the famous “Herbal”—gravely advises his readers that, in seasons of pestilence, they should arm themselves against the plague by taking twelve two-hundred-and-forty-sevenths of a single grain of saffron every morning before breaking their fast.\* At the time when the

\* Gerarde says, “The weight of *ten graines* of saffron, the kernels of walnuts, two ounces, figs, two ounces, mithridate, one drachm, and a few sage leaves stamp't with a sufficient quantity of Pimpernell water, and made into a masse or lumpe, and kept in a glasse for your use, and thereof *twelve graines*, given in the morning fasting, preserveth from pestilence and expelleth it from those that are

learned man gave this marvellous prescription, saffron was still so largely used in cookery that a luxurious feaster often consumed as much as a drachm, or even two drachms, of the yellow paint in four-and-twenty hours. From Gerarde's recipe, homœopathists may see that Hahnemann was not the first doctor to recommend *infinitesimal* doses.

Uncertainty covers the first introduction of the *Crocus Sativus* to English soil. On the strength of a pleasant tradition that has survived the culture of the plant in Essex, Hackluyt tells that the first bulb was brought to this country by a patriotic pilgrim, who, wishing to enrich his native land with the plant of the spice, hitherto imported only in cakes at great cost, *hid* the treasure in his palmer's staff, and so conveyed it to Britain. The name of the pious traveller, who thus eluded the vigilance of the police of an unrecorded mediæval custom-house, and thereby destroyed a lucrative monopoly of Eastern merchants, has not come to us with the story of his achievement. It is thus that history often neglects the *men* whose *deeds* are famous.

Anyhow, the bulb was planted and the flower infected." If we put the "few sage leaves" at the weight of an ounce, the entire confection would weigh five ounces one drachm, and ten grains; of which only ten grains were of saffron stigmata!

raised in Essex during the third Edward's reign; and it is probable that Richard the Second's cooks looked to the growers of that county for the greater part of their supply of the yellow spice which they used so lavishly. It was grown at an early date in Gloucestershire, and other parts of the West country. But, though some of the Elizabethan dealers in the commodity thought the saffron of the Western shires superior to that grown in the Eastern counties, and would even buy it at a slightly higher price than Essex saffron, East Anglia continued to the close of the seventeenth century to have larger crocus-grounds than any other part of the kingdom. Walden, on the Essex border, was for centuries the principal seat of the crocus-trade, from which it derived its distinguishing name of Saffron-Walden, long before Thomas, Earl of Norfolk built Audley End in that parish, in honour of his maternal grandfather, Lord Chancellor Audley (the pliant keeper of Henry the Eighth's elastic conscience), who there made his rural home on lands which he acquired from the king on the dissolution of Walden Abbey. The arms of the borough, "Three saffron flowers walled in," commemorate its ancient connection with the trade that, after enriching it for centuries, disappeared altogether at the close of the last century.

More than all other kinds of farming, the culture of saffron was laborious, costly, and perilous. The bulbs, in Elizabeth's time, cost in fairly plentiful years only two and eightpence a coomb; but in scarce seasons, when wet had rotted, or heat had parched the underground "stock," the farmer had to pay from eight to ten shillings per quarter for every twenty quarters of heads that were requisite for the planting of a single acre. To prepare the soil for his bulbs, the farmer had to manure it with thirty loads per acre of good dung; and the ground, even when so enriched, would not sustain the delicate and devouring growth for more than three successive years. It was true the soil was still capable of yielding barley for many years without more compost, after the removal of the bulbs; but the cost of the preparatory manuring was a heavy expense. Labour demanded further outlay. Every year the bulbs were raised in July, relieved of "rosse and filth," and carefully reset in rows before the later part of August. Each rank or row had to be covered and earthed up with fine mould. In September the ground was carefully weeded, so that "nothing might annoy the flower" when its head appeared above the earth. What with wages for stoning, payments for dunging, wages for raising and re-setting, and wages for weeding, the grower of the dainty plant was always putting his



hand into his pocket, and paying away money which he might never recover.

When at length the blue flowers smiled in long straight lines over the carefully gardened ground, the farmer's time of keenest anxiety and most urgent peril began. A heavy fall of rain might so batter and drench the delicate crop, and blend the blue dye of the petals with the yellow of the stigmata, that a whole acre would not yield him a single packet of marketable chives. Even fine rain would injure the stigmata, so as to make the crop of inferior quality. A strong gale of wind was no less hurtful than untimely showers. The time for picking the flowers and removing the chives, together with their filaments, having come, the grower was again compelled to pay wages in money or kind. By paying in money he parted with what he loved. If he paid the pickers with a proportion of gathered chives, he parted with material that a turn of the market might raise in a trice to three times the sum of wages rendered in coin. He could not dally and trifle with time—nor could he accomplish the task with only a few hands. It was necessary to gather the fresh blossoms when the morning dew was upon them, and before the sun of "St. Luke's little summer" had "caused them to welke and flitter." The flowers having been plucked, and the "yellows" separated from the worthless blue

petals, the next operation was to dry the chives and filaments by placing them on trays of strained canvas over a gentle fire. When dried, the chives were heaped together, pressed into cakes by means of weights, and put into bags for sale.

In "good times" the cakes sold for a price that nobly rewarded the grower, who had been so fortunate as to gather a large crop in fine condition. But for times to be good to a crocus-grower, it was necessary that they should be bad to his neighbour. Whilst his own harvest was abundant, he required that the general yield of the saffron-gardens should be deficient. Unless the general supply was defective, the owner of a large stock was compelled to sell it in a glutted market at a low rate. In which case, notwithstanding his high farming, and his vigilance, and his good fortune in escaping rain, and his cleverness in seizing the proper mornings for picking, he found himself even poorer than he would have been with an ordinary yield, after a generally deficient harvest.

Something was always less than quite fortunate with the saffron-farmers, or "crokers," as they were generally designated from their special growth. The bulbs rotted in the ground; or the wind caught the blossoms and injured the chives; or the show of yellows was deficient in quantity, colour, brightness, or fragranciness; or rain utterly destroyed the

whole produce of a ground, from which the "croker" had hoped to net a hundred pounds; or the harvest was everywhere so ruinously plentiful, that instead of rating from twenty to thirty shillings a-pound, new saffron, of the finest quality, was quoted at ten and twelve shillings.

It is not wonderful that a croker seldom wore a cheerful face. All farmers were grumblers, but the croker surpassed them all in querulous dissatisfaction. Other farmers were sometimes heard to admit that times might be worse, and that they might have more reason for complaint. But the "crokers" were always in the worst of hard times. They were incessant, unvarying, blasphemous grumblers. In an early year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, they surpassed themselves in grumbling at the prodigious yield of their commodity, which had been so enormous that they paid the pickers half the crop for their trouble. Soon the pickers brought their earnings into Walden market, and were competing with the "crokers." Saffron was "a drug in the market" in two senses. Merchants could buy any amount of it for next to nothing; and in their annoyance the "crokers" railed impiously at the Providence who had been so much too munificent. The exact terms in which the impious "crokers" vented their rage at Saffron Walden market are on record, but they are too grossly irreverent for repro-

duction on this page. Social sentiment declared against the "crokers," who were henceforth denounced as hateful examples of wicked discontent. Their impiety became proverbial, and farmers, in other departments of agriculture, checked one another for querulous dissatisfaction, by saying, "Come, come, man, don't be a 'croker.' It is enough for you to be a 'grumbler.'" The term passed quickly from folk-lore to literature; and when its origin had been lost sight of, the word was confounded by writers and dictionary-makers with a word of Saxon derivation. Webster and Richardson, *cum multis aliis* of their tribe, misspell "croker," and refer it to the same root as the "croaking" of a frog.

There was no trade more abounding in fraud and trickery than the saffron trade. The Elizabethan crokers used to dry the chives on greased papers, and put butter on the cakes of compressed stigmata, in order to give them a delusive brightness of colour. They used also to adulterate the genuine article with "scraped brazell and the floure of the Sonchus, which," says William Harrison, "cometh somewhat neere indeede to the hue of saffron (if it be gathered late), but it is soon betwraied both by the depth of the colour and the hardness." The presence of butter in a sample could be detected by the nice judge of the article; but the young and in-

experienced dealer was often imposed upon by the effects of grease.

Whilst the crokers were knavish grumblers, the saffron merchants—*i.e.* the dealers who bought the commodity of the farmers—were notable for the weakness and inflammatory state of their eyes, which suffered greatly from constant exposure to the irritating fumes of the spice. In their shops they usually defended their eyes with large leather-rimmed spectacles; and to save themselves from inhaling the irritating vapour too freely, they “muffled themselves as women doo when they ride.”

Surviving the Roman, or spoon-period, of English cookery, the culinary use of saffron prevailed in the earlier generations of the cuisine, which resulted from the introduction of the fork. Medical prejudice and jealousy retained it in the kitchen long after the general gust for its flavour had been weakened by the growing preference for the natural flavours of boiled and roasted meats served in “joints.” Throughout the seventeenth century, saffron held its ground as a condiment and colouring ingredient in food; and in years of scarcity it was sold at astoundingly high prices. For instance, in one year of James the First’s reign, it was ordinarily sold at £3. 3*s.* 4*d.* per pound, a rate exceeded in Charles the Second’s time, when a pound of the best chives



fetched no less than £4 1s. 10*d.*,\* an amazing price to those who bear in mind the value of money in the seventeenth century. Perhaps there is no article of fantastic luxury on which more money has been squandered than on saffron, at the order of fashion, morbid taste, and medical empiricism.

Whilst saffron was still used by the cooks of the seventeenth century, dyers and laundresses employed it as a colouring agent. It gave to silks the rich amber hue that was in vogue with the ladies of Anne of Denmark's court; and it was put into the starch that afforded stiffness and colour to the *yellow* bands and cuffs, which James the First detested almost as vehemently as tobacco-smoke. In the days of Solomon Stuart, society divided itself into two parties, and fought smartly about yellow-starched ruffs and laces. Whilst the one party insisted that red, blue, and purple dyes gave the

\* Lord Braybrooke gives the following examples of the fluctuations of the saffron market:—

*Prices of a pound of Saffron.*

			£	s.	d.				£	s.	d.
1548	.	.	0	12	0	1653	.	.	1	17	0
1561	.	.	1	5	0	1664	.	.	3	10	0
1614	.	.	3	3	4	1665	.	.	4	1	10
1631	.	.	0	18	0	1689	.	.	3	0	0
1647	.	.	1	2	0	1717	.	.	1	6	6

*Vide*—Lord Braybrooke's "HISTORY OF AUDLEY END." From Harrison we learn that the ordinary price of saffron in Queen Elizabeth's London was twenty shillings a-pound.

proper tints to such articles of costume, the other party declared as passionately in favour of yellow. But it was not in the power of the king's friends, who called yellow bands unclean, and the Puritans, who called them wicked, to put the new starch out of fashion. By wearing a yellow ruff at Tyburn, on the occasion of her execution for her part in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, Mrs. Turner threw a transient discredit on lemon-tinted lawn and lace, just as Mrs. Manning, the murderess of Victorian London, put black satin into disgrace for a season or two by mounting the scaffold in a robe of that material. But the champions of saffron soon regained their spirits. They only laughed contemptuously, and heightened the yellow of their starch, when, to put them to shame, it was ordered that the London hangman should wear on "hanging days" a yellow plume in his hat, and a yellow band round his neck.

The culinary use of saffron died very gradually. Indeed, even now it can scarcely be said to be extinct. In some of our counties dairymen still colour butter with it. Cheese also, in some districts, is tinged with crocus chives. The same may be said of the richly yellowed batter-puddings set on farmers' tables in the West of England, where saffron-bread and saffron-cake may still be seen. The large buns of Refreshment Room cookery,

which are so much richer to the eye than the palate, derive their "eggy look" from a discreet and delusive use of the ancient dye. Following in the wake of the cooks, our doctors relinquished the use of saffron, as a remedial agent, in the earlier years of the present century. Though it retains a place in the most recent and scientific of our pharmacopœias, physicians never prescribe it for strictly medicinal ends, and apothecaries use it only for colouring purposes. For the same object it is used by the knavish bird-sellers of our London streets, who are clever at changing house-sparrows into canary-birds by means of the dye.

Saffron is, of course, largely used in the artistic industries; but manufacturers and craftsmen procure their needful supplies of it from foreign countries. Relinquished in Essex at the close of the last century, the culture of the *Crocus Sativus* for commercial purposes may be said to have disappeared from England; though here and there, in the old saffron districts, cottage-gardeners may still produce a few chives for a strictly local market. Having ceased to be saffron-growers, why should not English farmers cease to be "crokers?"

## CHAPTER VII.

## DEATH IN THE POT, AND DISH-COVERS.

Tastyng and credence longethe to blode and birth royalle,  
 As pope, emperours, emperatrice, and cardynalle,  
 Kyng, queene, prince archebischoppe in palle,  
 Duke, erle, and no mo, bat y to remembrance calle.

"Credence is used and tastyng, for drede of poysenyng,  
 To alle officers y-sworne, and grete othe by charyng,  
 Therfore eche man in office kepe his rome sewer, closyng  
 Cloos howse, chest, and gardeuyan, for drede of congettyng.

"Steward and Chamburlayne of a prince of royalte,  
 They have, knowledge of homages, service and fewte;  
 So bey have ouersight of euery office, after beire degree,  
 By wrytyng be knowleche and be credence to ouerse.

"Therefore in makynge of his credence, it is to drede, y sey,  
 To marshalle, sewer, and kervere bey must allowt alwey,  
 To teche hym of his office, be credence hym to prey;  
 Thus shalle he not stand in makynge of his credence in no fray,"

JOHN RUSSELL'S "BOKE OF NURTURE."

HEROIC lives are hourly at the mercy of the meanest agents. The valet may any night steal up to his lord, and send him to the next world with a murderous blow. The barber, to whom the king bares his throat, may any morning put another sovereign on his throne. A familiar story records how Charles the Second was abruptly reminded of this unpleasant truth by a teacher who, for the lesson, received instant dismissal from the royal

service. "Go, man; you shall never shave me again. It is treason to imagine such a thing," exclaimed the "Saviour of Society" in the seventeenth century, to the poor fool who had only meant to be funny. Charles, King of England by the Grace of God, would have treated in the same manner any confidential and too communicative chef who had reminded him that it was easy for a malicious cook to season a monarch's broth with arsenic.

Fortunately for their peace of mind, and their power to enjoy the good things of this life, epicures are seldom troubled with ghastly suspicions of their cooks' sanity and good faith. Taking their soup trustfully, they presume that the *entrées* are "all right," or at least not murderously wrong. And so it is with inferior mortals, who eat their bread thankfully, and in a sure belief that it contains no worse poison than alum; but every now and then an incident, followed by a Coroner's inquest, gives a rude shock to this universal confidence. Gentlemen sometimes die suddenly after eating mortal *fungi*, mistaken for wholesome mushrooms by a careless cook. Death may lurk in the dish prepared by a culinary misanthropist, or in a bowl of milk from a "model dairy." Ugly stories could be told of chocolate cakes enriched with strychnine, and sweetmeats painted with arsenical green. To



gather such tales of horror, one has not to go back to the days and doings of Maria Margaret, Marchioness of Brinvilliers, or rake from anecdotal dustheaps the worst charges against Emma Hamilton. A year or two since, the diminutive nurse-girl of a lowly London household amused herself with sprinkling poison on the bread-and-butter given to the children of whom she had care. And just about the same time, murderous lozenges were thrown broadcast about the Brighton streets by a foolish woman, who just escaped death on the gallows because society shrunk from hanging a lady with a Parisian bonnet and seal-skin mantle.

A man should not be too thoughtful for his health when he is satisfying his hunger. "Everything agrees with you until it has disagreed with you," Abernethy remarked to the valetudinarian who troubled himself overmuch as to what he should eat, drink and avoid. The *malade imaginaire*, who creates dyspepsia for himself out of nervous fancies about his food, should take the surgeon's counsel to heart. Whilst dishes are usually wholesome to the eater who takes their wholesomeness for granted, the best fare is apt to avenge itself on the man who regards it with suspicion. Enjoyment is impossible at the dinner-table without proper confidence in the caterer and cook; and the man with a mischievous

habit of mistrusting them has travelled some way on the road that leads to the hell of hypochondria and ends in madness.

Of all monomaniacs, there are none more truly pitiable than the few wretched people who sniff poison in every culinary savour, and fear death from a sauce. Charles of Brunswick had said farewell to pleasure, as well as to virtue and decency, when, from dread of assassination, he would not taste the daintiest mess unless it had been prepared by his particular chef, and was set before him in a locked plate which none but himself and the supreme artiste could open. What gratification could the broken and fantastic voluptuary derive from his fabulous wealth, when, living only for this life, he had persuaded himself that his existence depended on the fidelity of the only servant whom he could trust to cook his food? Sustained by the imaginations of a guilty conscience, and aggravated by memories of deeds which had made him an object of mortal hatred to the victims of his wicked passions, the ex-duke's cowardly fear of poison had its origin in the morbid fastidiousness and timorous curiosity that often dominate the failing appetites of jaded epicures.

But ghastly experience forbade the potentates of mediæval Europe to feast without fear at any board where appetite met them. The preacher might

urge them in sacred language to take no thought for life ; but the poisoner, by acts more impressive than holy words, taught them to be apprehensive of sudden death. Poison was the favourite instrument of ambition and vengeance in olden time. The old story on which Shakespeare founded his noblest tragedy was told at every fireside of feudal Europe ; and wherever repeated, it stirred the minds of hearers who could parallel its grand crime with a deed of stealthy murder done near their own homes. Every castle had its tale of poisoning. The annals of every princely house covered traditions which justified the precautions taken daily under every chieftain's roof against the treachery of cooks and servers, carvers and cup-bearers. The lord of olden time was taught by his own domestic story, that death might come to him at any moment from poison put in meat or drink, from poison in bread or salt, from poison in sauce or sweet-meat. And to guard against such peril, arising from the anger of vindictive vassals, or the designs of pretenders to his throne, he had recourse to measures which are dismally significant of ceaseless dread and incessant treachery.

The fidelity of an agent must be purchased with a price something in excess of any payment that is likely to be offered for his treachery. This principle is daily recognized by men of business in "the

City," where confidential servants with large opportunities for theft are paid highly, in order that they may be honest. Of course out of proper regard for their feelings, it is always assumed that "judgment" and "experience" are the qualities so liberally remunerated. On several grounds it would be unwise to impress on a chief cashier or secretary that his large payment, for work which a simpleton could do, was an arrangement to restrain him from arrant roguery. But courteous phrases do not blind the cashier and his paymaster to the real purpose of the munificence.

The same principle was daily recognized and acted upon by men of chivalry in feudal England. In proportion as he was likely to be bribed to poison his lord, the cook was paid lavishly. The sovereign of Norman England placed over his household a courtier who had a strong, selfish interest in keeping him alive. Usually a man of noble lineage, the Steward of the Royal Household was gratified with princely bounties, and encouraged with princely promises. He was thus taught to feel that under any circumstances he would be a great loser by his master's death. The steward's subordinate officers, especially those who held chief places in the kitchen or approached the royal person at festal moments, were appointed from the same consideration, and paid with the same prudent prodigality. The

Larderarius, always a gentleman, often a sacred personage, ranked with folk of courtly degree. If a layman, he might hope for a traitor's forfeited estate in reward for his vigilance over the larder. If in holy orders, he looked to a bishopric as a probable guerdon of his services. The Dapifer had even more splendid hopes from the faithful performance of duties now-a-days contemned as servile. The chef, a man of noble ancestry and of science, according to the scientific light and darkness of the time, seldom retired from the office of "Coqus Dominicæ Coquinæ," without a grant of lands that fixed him and heirs amongst the territorial magnates of a shire. The explanation of the curious tenures requiring the holders of certain lands to perform, or be ready to perform, culinary service for the sovereign's comfort,\* must be sought

\* "The Norman Conqueror William bestowed several portions of land on these highly favoured domestics, the 'Coquorum Præpositus,' and the 'Coqus Regius.' A manor was bestowed on Robert Argyllon, the 'Grand Queux,' to be held by the service of making one mess in an earthen pot in the kitchen of our Lord the King, on the day of his Coronation, called 'De la Groute,' i.e., a kind of plum-porridge, or water-gruel with plums in it. This dish is still served up at the Royal Table at coronations, by the lord of the said Manor of Addington. At the Coronation of George IV., Court of Claims, July 12, 1820, the petition of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which was presented by Sir G. Nayler, claiming to perform the service of presenting a dish De la Groute to the king at the banquet, was considered by the Court, and allowed."—*Vide* DR KITCHINER'S "COOK'S ORACLE."



in the usages of time when cooks at court were gentlemen who rose to wealth and dignities in the ordinary course of professional service.

One often hears indignant language about the exorbitant wages paid at the present time to their cooks by great men, who are far from liberal to their children's tutors and governesses. But it is certain that cooks of the highest rank are paid far less liberally in modern, than they were in strictly feudal England. Now-a-days, a prince's chef gets a salary of some £300 per annum, together with a few trumpery perquisites, and the use of a dog-cart. In Norman England he had a salary equal to ten times that amount of modern money, a large quantity of lucrative patronage, and the prospect of a noble gift of lands. As life grew more secure, the chef's fees became fewer and smaller. In proportion as his opportunities for murder, and his temptations to turn poisoner diminished in number and force, he lost power over his patron's purse. He may still be paid above the dignity of his labour; but the time has long passed when he was rewarded with a munificence that caused gentlemen of quality to enter the culinary profession.

Wherever he went, a feudal potentate of the higher degrees was attended by his cook. At whatever table he sat, the dishes of which he partook were prepared by the officer who was at the same time

his *chef de cuisine* and body-guard. The same fashion still prevails in the East, where princes are taught by experience to regard their most complaisant entertainers with suspicion. Bringing with him nobles, whom he could not have safely left at Teheran during his long absence from the seat of government, the Shah of Persia was accompanied on his Western tour by cooks in whose loyalty he could confide. The same retinue, whose splendour was heightened by courtiers tainted with disaffection, comprised a staff of culinary artistes whose vigilance gave Nasr-ul-Deen a sense of security from poison.

Six hundred years since, when he visited Oxford on a perilous mission, Cardinal Otho provided for his safety by retaining a cook, who was not more firmly attached to him by interest than by natural affection. Originating in the voluntary association of a few schoolmasters, the guild of teachers had become a populous and famous university, when Gregory the Ninth's legate approached it with a purpose agreeable to the policy of the academic friars and monks, but highly displeasing to the academic seculars and laity. "Universitas" was divided just then into two great parties that had for years been striving for the superiority. The one party consisted of the favourers of papal pretension, who, in their desire to dominate in the

schools and even exclude the ancient laical element of the community, welcomed the sacred envoy with significant enthusiasm. The other and more numerous party, consisting of seculars and laics, in their hatred of the friars, and their jealousy of Rome, denounced the legate as a hostile intruder. Otho saw his danger, and prudently appointed his own brother to the important office of *chef de cuisine* to the embassy. The object of this appointment is specially stated by Matthew Paris, the contemporary chronicler, who says that the envoy's kinsman was selected for the post, "*ne procuraretur aliquid venenorum, quod nimis timebat legatus.*" Otho had scarcely taken up his quarters at Oseney Abbey, when his opponents marched out from Oxford to the religious house with a show of anger and force, that, belying their peaceable professions, quickened the legate's fear, and justified him in refusing to give them an interview. In the ensuing conflict which afforded a momentary advantage to the turbulent scholars, and sent Otho flying to Abingdon, the chef was killed whilst courageously covering his brother's retreat from the studious mob. Whilst the cook's martial zeal points to the two-fold nature of his office, his fate is significant of the view which the assailants took of his functions. Thirsting for the legate's life, the Welshman who shot the fatal arrow felt that he would do much for the

accomplishment of his purpose by killing the envoy's culinary protector. The chef having been put out of the way, another cook might be induced to poison the Cardinal.

But when the mediæval prince had placed loyal adherents in the chief offices of his kitchen, larder, pantry, and buttery, and had provided for their continuance in fidelity, by assigning them liberal salaries, he had only taken the first general precautions against poisoners. It still remained for him to direct the Marshal of his household to keep a vigilant eye on the highly paid retainers, and yet further to lessen the chances of poisonous misadventure by a nice and daily observance of the "rules of the assay." By these numerous and cleverly devised rules, every principal servant, concerned in the preparation or serving of meat and drink, was placed under the suspicious observation of another ministrant. It is needful that the reader should pay particular attention to the practices of "assay," "credence," or "tasting," as they were indifferently termed, in order that he may realize the degree in which the fear of death from the pot prevailed in feudal society, and may also appreciate the pains taken to defeat poisoners.

The great man's table was never spread without a strict observance of these practices, which had for their object that he should eat of no dish and drink

of no draught that had not been previously tested by official tasters. When the cloth had been laid by subordinate servants, it devolved on some chief officer of the household—the chief sewer, the captain of the yeomen, the dapifer, or the marshal himself—to see that every article on the table was free from poison. The bread, cut for the great man's mouth, was tested thus. In the presence of the "taker of the assay," the chief officer of the pantry, kneeling at the table, ate a piece of the bread, which the carver cut from the prepared pieces. At the same time he partook of the salt in the lord's salt-cellar. To ascertain that no poison lurked in the water in which the lord would wash his hands, the yeoman or server who placed the basin on the board was required to drink some of the fluid in the presence of the assaying officer. In like manner every spoon, knife, or napkin put on the table was kissed by a responsible servant, who thereby certified to the officer of assay that no murderous powder had been sprinkled on the linen, that no poisonous unguent had been treacherously applied to spoon or knife. These last named implements were burnished brightly, out of regard for the lord's peace of mind no less than for the mere pleasure of his eye. If a spoon or knife were dull, he was quick to suspect that it was smeared with poison.



All these precautions having been taken against the presence of poison in the furniture of the table, the salt-dish was *covered* with its lid, and the bread was *covered* with its napkin. A fair white pallium, the surnappe, was then raised by special officers, and put with much ceremony over the whole table. Of course the several processes of this preliminary assay were not performed without much bowing, kneeling, kissing, and foot-scraping by the gentle servitors.\* The white coverlet having fallen over

\* Of the formalities observed at the laying of the royal table in Greenwich Palace, during Queen Elizabeth's reign, Paul Hentzner gives the following account in the *Itinerarium*, freely Englished by Horace Walpole: "A gentleman entered the room bearing a rod, and along with him another who had a table-cloth, which, after they had both kneeled three times, with the utmost veneration, he spread upon the table, and after kneeling again, they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a salt-cellar, a plate, and bread; when they had kneeled, as the others had done, and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired, with the same ceremonies performed by the first. At last came an unmarried lady, (we were told she was a Countess), and along with her a married one, bearing a *tasting-knife*; the former was dressed in white silk, who, when she had prostrated herself three times, in the most graceful manner, approached the table, and rubbed the plates with bread and salt, with as much care as if the Queen had been present; when they had waited there a little time, the Yeomen of the Guard entered bare-headed, cloathed in scarlet with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn, a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plate, most of it gilt; these dishes were received by a gentleman in the same order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster

the board, no one but the chief sewer or yeoman might raise it; and even he might not presume to do so until the moment came for its ceremonious removal in the presence of the lord himself, or one of the supreme officers of the household. No serving-man could prematurely or impertinently touch the sur-cloth and escape suspicion of treason. The page caught with his hand under the white drapery, was sure of a terrible flogging for his officiousness. In troublous times he seldom escaped with so light a punishment. To prove that any meddling varlet, after the falling of the surnappe, had touched the *covered* salt or *covered* bread, was to compass his quick dismissal to the hangman.

The time for "serving the meats" having come, the chief sewer, or other officer of the assay, went to the kitchen dresser, and tested the loyalty of the steward and cook. Having cut a cornet of bread,

gave to each guard a mouthful to eat, for fear of poison. During the time that this guard, which consists of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service, were bringing dinner, twelve trumpets and two kettle-drums made the hall ring for half an hour together. At the end of all this ceremonial, a number of unmarried ladies appeared, who with particular solemnity lifted the meat off the table, and conveyed it into the Queen's inner and more private chamber, where after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the court. The Queen sups and dines alone with very few attendants, and it is very seldom anybody, foreigner or native, is admitted at that time, and then only at the intercession of some one in power."

he touched the first dish with it in three places, and then saw the steward and chef eat it. With a fresh cornet for each dish of soup, porridge, hotch-pot, or other mess containing much liquor, he repeated this ceremony again and again, until he had seen the cook and steward eat as many triangular pieces of bread as there were dishes of fluid compounds for the lord's table. Each cornet was dipped thrice in the dish under assay; and the sewer flourished it thrice over his head before putting it to the lips of the two chief officers of the kitchen. Together with each cornet, the steward and cook were required to eat a piece of the meat of the dish in which it had been dipped. A morsel from each of the substantial viands was given to both of them, so that they ate of every "stew," "roast," "boil," "broil," "made dish," "porridge," or "sauce" that passed from their dresser. The same precautions were taken with the closed pies, each of which was opened, in order that its two responsible makers should eat of it. Every preparation, from the soups to the sweetmeats, from the brawn to the jellies, was tested with the same formality. Not a *single eatable thing*\* left the kitchen dresser until it had been assayed.

\* "In the mean tyme the server goeth to the dresser, and there taketh assay of every dyshe, and doth geve it to the stewarde and the cooke to eat of all porreges, mustards, and other sauces. He

As soon as it had been duly assayed, each dish was *covered*, and put into the hands of the servitor, whose duty it was to bear it to the table. It should be particularly observed that each dish, whether hot or cold, was *covered*. The bearer was bound to carry it directly to the banqueting-room. Even though the metal dish burnt his hands, he might not set it down for a moment. To stop on his way was to expose himself to suspicion of tampering with the dish. If he ventured to raise the cover, the worst construction was put upon the act, for the *cover* of a hot dish was used to keep out poison, rather than to keep in heat. In the case of a cold dish, the only use of the cover was to guard its contents against poisoners. So that the heat of a silver dish, containing a hot mess, might not trouble him in the performance of his duty, the bearer, a gentle servant, *sworn*, like his official superiors, to do his work

taketh assay with cornetts of trencher bread of his own cuttyng, and that is thus: He taketh a cornet of bread in his hande, and toucheth three parts of the dishe, and maketh a floryshe over it, and giveth it to the aforementioned persons to eate, and of every stewed meate, roasted, boylde, or broyled, beyng fyshe or fleshe, he cutteth a little thereof, &c. And yf it be baked meat close, unclose it, and take assaye thereof, as ye do of sawces, and that is with cornetts of breade, and so with all other meates, as custards, tartes, gelly, with other such lyke. The ministers of the churche doth after the olde custome, in syngyng of some proper or godly caroll.”—*Vide THE INTHRONIZATION OF ARCHBISHOP NEVILL. Temp. EDWARD THE FOURTH.*

faithfully, would guard his hands with a layer of crumbs of bread, taking care to hold the bread so that it was not visible. Sewers are particularly instructed on this last point in one of the most noteworthy passages of the "Boke of Curtasye\*" (A.D. 1430—40.)

As each dish was brought to the table, it was again tasted by an officer of assaye, in the presence of the august persons who eventually consumed it. The marshal, the chief sewer, and the carver having made solemn reverences to the high table, and taken proper positions before it, each act of the grand assay before the table was performed ceremoniously, whilst grace and carols were chanted. The marshal standing, the sewer on his knees, received from the carver a succession of cornets dipped in the fluid

\* The Author of "The Boke of Curtasye" says,

"This wyle þo squyer to kechyn shall go,  
And brynges a bof for assay þo;  
Tho Coke assayes þe mete ungrist,  
Tho sewer he takes and kouers on ryzt;  
Wo so euer he takes þat mete to bere,  
Schalle not so hardy þo couerture rere,  
For cold ne hote, I warne you alle,  
For suspecyon of treson as may befallē.  
Yf þo syluer dysshe wylle algate brenne,  
A sotelté I wylle þe kenne,  
Take þe bredde coruyn and lay by-twene,  
And kepe þe welle hit be not sene;  
I teche hit for no curtayse,  
But for þyn ese.

*Vide*, "THE BOKE OF CURTASYE."



preparations, and pieces of meat cut from the other viands, just as the steward and cook had been shortly before fed by the sewer from each dish at the kitchen dresser. When the sewer knelt the dish-bearer knelt, and when the sewer rose from his knee the bearer stood erect. Having removed the cover, which had been put on the dish in the kitchen, the carver, duly dipping and flourishing each cornet of bread, fed the sewer with the compound which he had sent to the hall. At the same time the carver gave a dipped cornet or testing-piece of the viand to the dish-bearer; so that if the server had sent, or the bearer carried, a poisoned dish, he would suffer for it rightly under the eyes of his lord. No dish passed from the bearer's hands to the table until it had been so assayed on the persons of bearer and sewer.\* The dishes

\* Then the marshall standeth styll, and the sewer kneeleth on his knee besydes the carver, who receaveth every dyshe in course of kynde, and uncovereth them. Then the carver of all potages and sauces taketh assay with a cornet of trencher bread of his owne cuttyng, he toucheth three partes of the dishe, and maketh a flourishe over it, and geveth it to the sewer, and to the bearer of the dyshe; and yf it be any maner of fowle, take the assaye thereof at the outsyde of the thygh or wynges; and yf it be any baked meat, that is closed, uncover hym, and take assays therof with cornettes dypt into the gravy, and geve it to the sewer, ut supra. And of all custardes, tartes, march-paynes, or gelly take assay with cornetts. And of all subtleties or leches, with your brode knyfe a litle of, and geve it to the sewer and bearer, ut supra."—*Vide*, "THE INTHRONIZATION OF ARCHBISHOP NEVILL."

having been thus "assayed" by "tasting," they became "dishes of credence," *i.e.*, the lord might trust them as fit for his diet.

But the usages of the assay were not over when the board was at length covered with dishes. The fish and flesh having been served, the *cover* was taken from the salt, which was forthwith tested by the chief panter in his lord's presence.

Every cup of drink served to the great man was in like manner assayed twice, once in the buttery and again in the hall. In the buttery the butler was required to drink, under the marshal's eye, some of every vessel of liquor sent to the high table; and at the same place the marshal *covered* with its lid every cup, before committing it to the lord's cup-bearer. It was treason for a cup-bearer to raise the lid of a vessel thus confided to him, on his way from the buttery to the table; but a sip of liquor came to his lips before his lord took a draught. On serving his master the cup-bearer knelt, removed the lid, and then poured a little of the drink into the inverted cover.\* When he had

\* In the mean tyme the marshall goeth to the buttery, to see the covered cup be right served, and geueth to the butler his assay, and delyvereth to the cup-bearer the cup of estate, and when the cup-bearer commeth to the table, after his obeysaunce, he kneeleth on his knee, and putteth foorth three or four droppes of ale into the insyde of the cover of the cuppe, and suppes it of for his assaye. Then he settes the cup besydes the Lord and covereth it, and then

drunk the liquor from the the lid, which became for the moment a drinking-cup, the servant handed the cup of estate to his master, who, on seeing the liquor thus tasted, and assayed under his eyes, accepted it as a liquor of "credence," which he might drink trustfully.

At the conclusion of the meal, the assayed surnappe was ceremoniously drawn over the high table, and napkins were given to the lord and his chief guests by ministrants, who kissed the linen, to signify its freedom from poison. Having washed their hands and lips in assayed water, and dried them on the assayed cloths, the potentate and his friends retired from the banqueting-room.

It is obvious that several minutes were occupied by the usages of assay; but whilst their observance afforded abundant time for the orderly setting out

all the Table is served with Ale."—*Vide*, "THE INTHRONIZATION OF ARCHBISHOP NEVILL."

"As oft as þe kerver fettys drynke,  
The butler assayes hit how good hym thynke,  
In þe lordys cupp þat leuys undrynken,  
Into þe almesdisshe hit schalle be souken,  
The kerver anon with-outen thouzt,  
Unkouers þe cup þat he have brouȝt;  
Into þe couertoure wyn he powres out,  
Or into a spare pece, withouten doute;  
Assayes, an gefes þe lords to drynke,  
Or setles hit down as hym goode thynke."

*Vide*, "THE BOKE OF CURTASTY."

of the numerous dishes of the several courses, measures were taken to render the unavoidable delay as little irksome as possible to the feasters. Whilst the dishes of the first course were being assayed, the clerks sung an elaborate grace, or after "the olde custome," chanted "some proper and Godly caroll." Music of the same kind diverted the guests, whilst the dishes of the second and third courses were submitted to "the tasting." And, doubtless, the jester seized his opportunity for throwing out saucy speeches, and provoking laughter during these pauses in the pleasures of the table.

Whilst these precautions against murder were taken at every meal by personages of high estate, men of low degree ate the porridge without dread. But it is uncertain at what social line the usages of the assay were neglected. John Russell, indeed, in the "Boke of Nurture," declares that "credence" pertained to no person, whose dignity was beneath that of an earl; a statement implying that, at least in Russell's opinion, the territorial lord was guilty of ludicrous presumption and a heinous offence against etiquette, who, being lower than an earl, required the viands of his peculiar table to be submitted to the assay. But remembering the pleasure which people of the inferior degrees of gentility find in copying the fashions of their social

betters, the reader will doubtless think it probable that, in the absence of an express law forbidding the assay at the tables of the lower quality, "credence" was commonly practised in the kitchens and banqueting-rooms of manorial seigniors and simple knights, whose wealth was more considerable than their heraldic distinctions. Russell, be it remembered, was the chamberlain and marshal of the good Duke Humphrey, of Gloucester, who was in his day a superbly lavish entertainer, though his name has long since passed into a proverbial pleasantry which, commemorating in olden time his princely munificence to scholars, has in these later generations been generally misconstrued to the discredit of his hospitality. As the chamberlain and majordomo of "A kynges sone, uncle to the kyng," it is probable that John Russell "drew the line" beneath which "credence" could not be rightly observed, much higher in the table of precedence than it would have been drawn by the chief servitor of many a "right worthy knight."

Anyhow, the usages of the assay were ceremoniously performed, after the fashions set forth, in all the princely and greatly noble houses of mediæval England. They were also observed in such establishments throughout the strictly feudal period of our history. Indeed they survived feudalism, and are still commemorated in the titles



of courtly servants and the customs of royal kitchens. Writing towards the close of the last century, the Reverend Richard Warner observed that the two "yeomen of the mouth," still maintained on the royal establishment of St. James's Palace, were the official successors of the gentle serving-men, who, in ancient days, tested with their own lips the meat and drink offered to princely feasters.

No sovereign of comparatively modern time had more reason to fear poisoners, and take continual precaution against them than the virgin-queen of England whose capital harboured scores of religious zealots, hopeful to win salvation by taking her life. And that she employed the most important of the ancient measures for excluding death from the pot, we know from the graphic page of the most amusing "literary tourist" of the sixteenth century. When he visited England in 1598, Paul Hentzner went down to Greenwich by a boat which occasioned much commotion and noise amongst the flocks of swans\* that whitened the surface of the river. On landing, the traveller went to Greenwich Palace,

\* "This river," says Hentzner, whose Latin record of his stay in England was loosely Englished by Horace Walpole, "abounds in swans, swimming in flocks; the sight of them and their noise is vastly agreeable to the fleets that meet them in their course." "Olores autem," runs the original narrative, "agminatim, læto occursu et festivis cantibus subeuntes classes recipiunt, ac undique

and saw the fast-aging queen take the chief meal of the day. Gorgeously-clad in red jackets, embellished with golden roses, the *buffetiers* brought the viands from the kitchen to the banquetting-chamber on silver or silver-gilt dishes. The German spectator was delighted with the brave costume, and superb stature of the gentle side-board-men, who were the tallest and comeliest fellows in the whole country. Twelve trumpeters and two drummers played martial music in the great hall, whilst the dishes were being arranged on the high-table. And as each *buffetier* approached the dais, he paused before a lady-in-waiting, the Prægustatrix, who assayed the dish in his hands by giving him a mouthful of its contents.\* The viands having

retia siluris atque salmonibus expanduntur.”—*Vide* PAULI HENTZNERI “ITINERARIUM.”

\* “Cumque pabulum com̄morata ad mensam esset, venerunt satellites regii, omnes capite nudi, sagis rubris induti, quibus in posticâ parte erant affixæ rosæ aureæ, singulis vicibus xxiv messes ferculorum, in patinis argenteis et maxima ex parte deauratis, adferentes; ab his nobilis quidam ordine cibos accepit et mensæ imposuit; prægustatrix vero, cuilibet satelliti, ex eâdem, quam ipsemet attulerat, patinâ, buccellam degustandam præbuit, ne aliqua veneni subesset suspicio. Dum satellites isti, qui centum numero, procerâ corporis staturâ, et omnium robustissimi ex toto Angliæ regno, ad hoc munus summâ curâ deliguntur, supradictos cibos adportarent, erant in aulæ area xii Tubicines, et duo Tympanistæ, qui tubis, buccinis, et tympanis magno sonitu per sesquihoram clangebant; cæremoniis autem, modo commemoratis, circa mensam absolutis, aderant illis virgines aliquot nobiles, quæ singulari cum

been thus essayed and placed upon the table, maids of honour (*virgines aliquot nobiles*) entered the banqueting-chamber, and taking the dishes in their hands bore them to an inner room, where the queen ate her dinner under the observation of a few ladies and gentlemen of the court who stood before her.

From what has been said of the care taken by assayers to cover the tasted meats and drinks, readers may see the original purpose of dish-covers and pot-lids, which were mere guards against poison. It also appears from the instruction given to cup-bearers by the author of the "Boke of Curtasye," that the lid of a cup of estate was not attached to the vessel, as the cup-bearer, after removing the cover and inverting it, was required to use it as a drinking-cup.

veneratione, cibos de mensâ auferebant, et in interius et secretius Reginæ cubiculum adportabant: Eligere ibi Regina solet quos vult, cæteri pro Gynæceo servantur. Prandet et cænat sola paucis astantibus.—*Vide* PAULI HENTZNERI, J. C., "ITINERARIUM GERMANIÆ, GALLIÆ, ANGLIÆ, ITALIÆ."

Horace Walpole's English rendering of this specimen of Hentzner's Latin has been given in a previous note. In the dress of these *buffetiers* of Greenwich Palace, the reader recognizes the ancient costume of the "beef-eaters" of the Tower of London. In the seventeenth century the beef-eater's bright jacket bore only the English *rose*. It received the additional adornment of the thistle when the Stuart came to the throne. The shamrock leaves were added at a still later date.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MEDIÆVAL MENUS.

"The messes both in the Roll and the Editor's MS. are chiefly soups, potages, ragouts, hashes, and the like hotch-potches; entire joints of meat being never served, and animals, whether fish or fowl, seldom brought to table whole, but hacked and hewed, and cut in pieces or gobbets. The mortar was also in great request, some messes being actually denominated from it, as mortreus or morterelys."—*Vide* SAMUEL PEGGE ON "THE FORME OF CURY."

"Of alle maner metes ye must thus know and fele,  
The fumosities of fysz, flesche and fowles dyners and feele,  
And alle maner of sawces for fische and flesche to preserve your  
lord in heale;  
To yow it belongyth to know alle þese euery deale."

*Vide* "THE BOKE OF NURTURE."

THE mediæval menus for stately banquets comprised three courses, with from eight or ten to twenty or more different viands in each course. Inferior dinners often had but two courses: and a homely entertainer incurred no charge of niggardliness if his bill of fare consisted of a single course of many dishes. But in "high life," from the Conquest to the Reformation, the table was covered three times at a ceremonious feast; and it was usual, at least in times subsequent to the opening of the fifteenth century, to prelude the first course with some such whet as brawn served with mustard-

sauce, and a glass of Malmsey (if brawn was no part of the first course), and to follow up the third course with a wafer and comforting fillip of hippocras, the favourite liqueur of our olden epicures. The preliminary whet and concluding fillip were, in the language of cooks, "given out of course." The menus at Henry the Fourth's nuptials with Jane of Navarre, and at Henry the Fifth's marriage with Catharine of France, like the stateliest bills of fare set forth in John Russell's "*Boke of Nurture*," comprised three courses. The same was the provision for the *chief* tables at the Inthronization of Archbishop Neville and Archbishop Warham.

At Henry the Fourth's bridal feast, a feast of several days and many separate regalements, there was a fish menu and a flesh menu; the one for banquets on fish-days, and the other for repasts on flesh-days. Following a bad leader, Mr. Warner has regarded these separate menus as parts of the same bill of fare, and inferred erroneously that the nuptial dinner had *six* courses, a procedure unknown to the culinary authorities of the period.

The flesh-menu was as follows :—

*The First Course.*—1. Fillets of meat, rolled, fried in bread-crumbs, and powdered with dried herbs and galyngale. 2. A standing compote of ground rice, honey, salted mulberries, flavoured with spices



and wine. 3. Hotchpot of common meats, such as beef, mutton, veal. 4. Young swans. 5. Fat capons. 6. Pheasants. 7. Fat puddings of minced meat in crust. 8. A subtlety.

*The Second Course.*—1. Hashed venison with frumenty. 2. Jelly. 3. Sucking-pigs. 4. Rabbits. 5. Bittern. 6. Stuffed *puleyng* (whatever that may be). 7. Fried leaches, made chiefly of cream, sugar, isinglass, and almonds. 8. Boiled brawns, *i.e.*, pieces of flesh of swine and other creatures. 9. A subtlety.

*The Third Course.*—1. Almond-cream. 2. Pears in syrup. 3. Roast venison. 4. Ryde. 5. Woodcocks. 6. Plovers. 7. Rabbits. 8. Quails. 9. Snipes. 10. Fieldfares. 11. A meat (probably game) pie. 12. Sturgeon. 13. Fritters. 14. A subtlety.

For fish-feasts, the following bill of fare was provided:—

*The First Course.*—1. Viand Royal: the standing compote of rice, honey, and salted mulberries, that figured in the first course of the flesh-menu. 2. Lombardy mess of divers fish. 3. Salt-fish. 4. Lampreys powdered with spices. 5. Pike. 6. Bream. 7. Roasted salmon. 8. Lombardy fish-pie. 9. A subtlety.

*The Second Course.*—1. Hashed porpoise with frumenty. 2. Jelly. 3. Bream. 4. Salmon.

5. Conger-eels. 6. Gurnards. 7. Plaice. 8. Lamprey-pie. 9. Fried leaches. 10. A subtlety.

*The Third Course.*—1. Almond cream. 2. Pears in syrup. 3. Tench, two in a dish. 4. Trout. 5. Fried flounders. 6. Perch. 7. Roast lamprey. 8. Lochys and colys (whatever they may be). 9. Sturgeon. 10. Crabs, crayfish, and lobsters. 11. Graspeys (*sic*). 12. A subtlety.

At the nuptial banquets of Henry the Fifth and Catharine, the fish-menu was this :—

*The First Course.*—1. Brawn and mustard. 2. Eels. 3. Frumenty. 4. Pike with herbs. 5. Lamprey powdered with spices. 6. Trout. 7. Codlings. 8. Fried plaice. 9. Fried whittings. 10. Crabs. 11. A Lombardy leach, flourished. 12. Fish-pies, *i.e.*, hotch-potches of fish served in crust. 13. A subtlety, representing a pelican on a nest with her birds, and Saint Catherine holding a book, and disputing with the doctors; in Catherine's hand "a reson," inscribed, "Madame la Royne," whilst from the pelican's mouth issued a scroll inscribed, "Ce est la signe, et du Roy, pur tenir joy, et a tout sa gent elle mete sa intent."

*The Second Course.*—1. Jelly dyed with columbine flowers. 2. White pottage or almond-cream. 3. Sea-bream. 4. Conger-eels. 5. Soles. 6. Chevin. 7. Broiled roach. 8. Fried smelts. 9. Lobster or crayfish. 10. Leaches with Damascus cakes,

flourished with “une sans plus.” 11. Baked lampreys. 12. Flampaynes\* flourished with an heraldic device, *i.e.*, “a scutcheon royal, containing three crowns of gold, and planted with *fleurs de lis* and flowers of enamel wrought with confections.” 13. A subtlety: “a panter, with an image of Saynte Katherine with a whele in her hande, and a rolle wyth a reason in her other hande, saying, “La Royne ma file in ceste ile par bon reson aves renount.”

*The Third Course.*—Dates in compost, *i.e.*, fruit mince-meat. 2. Mottled cream. 3. Carp, fried with oil, bread-crumbs and onions. 4. Turbot. 5. Tenche. 6. Perch. 7. Fresh sturgeon with welkes. 8. Roast porpoise. 9. Crayfish. 10. Prawns. 11. Eels roasted with lampreys. 12. A white leach, embellished with hawthorn leaves and red bramble-berries. 13. A marchpayne, *i.e.*, grand cake, garnished with figures of angels, and an image of St. Catherine, holding the motto, “Il est escrit par voir et eit, per marriage pur, cest guerre ne dure.” 14. A subtlety (thus described in the old record): “A tiger, lookynge in a myrour, and a man syttyng on horsebacke, clene armyd, holdynge

\* Flaumpeyns.—Take fat pork ysode. Pyke it clene. Grynde it smalle. Grynde chese, and do thereto; with sugar, and gode powders make a coffyn of an inche depe, and do this fars therein. Make a thynne foile of gode paste and kerve out thereof smale pointes. Fry ham fars, and bake it up on.

in hys armes a tyger whelpe with this reason, ‘*Par force sanz reson je ay prise cest beste;*’ and with his one hande makynge a countenance of throwynge of myrrours at the great tigre, the which hold thys reson, ‘*Gile de mirrour ma fete distour.*’”

Special inquirers having been told where they may find fuller particulars concerning the arrangements of the English dinner-table in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there is no need to burden these pages with many bills of fare; but general readers will like to glance at the menus set forth in the “Boke of Nurture” by the greatest authority of his day on all matters of courtly feeding. For “a dynere of flesche,” John Russell directs:—

“THE FURST COURSE,

“Furst set for the mustard and brawne of boore, be wild swyne,  
Such potage as be cooke hath made of yerbis, spice, and wyne,  
Beeff, moton, stewed feysawnd, Swan with the Chawdwyñ,  
Capourn, pigge, vensoun bake, leche lombard, fruture viaunt fyne;

And þan a Sotelte:

Maydoñ mary þat holy virgyne,

And Gabrielle gretynge hur with an ave.

“THE SECOND COURSE,

“Two potages, blanger mangere, and also jely,  
For a standard, vensoun rost, kynd, fawne, or cony,  
Bustard, stork, crane, pecok in hakille ryally,  
Heiron-sew or betowre, with serve with bred, yf þat drynk be by;  
Partriche, wodcok, plovere, egret, rabettes sowhere;  
Gret briddes, larkes, gentille breme de mere,  
Doucettes, payn puff, with leche Joly Ambere,  
Fretour powche, a sotelte folowyng in fere,

The course for to fullfyll,  
 An angelle goodly kan appere,  
 And syngynge with a mery chere,  
 Unto iij sheperdes uppon an hille.

“THE II<sup>d</sup>. COURSE.

“Creme of almondes, and mameny, be iij course in coost,  
 Curlew, brew, snytes, quales, sparrows, martonettes rost,  
 Perche in gely, crevise deive douz, pety perneis with be moost,  
 Quynces bake, leche dugard, Fruture sage, y speke of cost,  
 And soteltes for the soleyne :

That lady þat conseuyd by the holy gost,  
 Hym þat distroyed be fendes boost,

Presented plesauntly by be kynges of coleyn.

Afftur þis, delicatis mo.

Blaunderelle, or pepyns, with caraway in confite,

Wafurs to ete, ypocras to drynk with delite.

Now this fest is fynysched, voyd be table quyte,

Go we to be fysche fest while we haue respite,

And þan with goddes grace be fest wille be do.”

No mere regalement for ascetics, the “dinere of fische,” prescribed by John Russell, was not less rich in dainties and tasteful ornaments than the flesh banquet.

“THE FURST COURSE.

“Muselade or menows, with be samoun bellows, eles, lampurns in fere.

Peson with with be purpose, as good potage, as y suppose,

As falleth for tyme of be yere :

Baken herynge, sugre peroñ strewynge,

Grene myllewelle, deynteth and not dere ;

Pike, lamprey, or soolis, purpose rosted on coles,

Gurnard, lampurnes bake, a leche, and a fritoure ;

A semely sotelte folowynge even here,

A galaunt yonge man, a wanton wight,



Pypyng and syngyng, lovyng and lyght,  
 Standyng on a clowd, sanguineus he hight,  
 The begynnyng of þe seson þat cleped is ver:

“THE SECOND COURSE.

“Dates in confyte, jely red and white,  
 This is good dewyng;   
 Congur, somon, dorrar, in syrippe if þey lay,  
 With ober disches in sewyng.  
 Brett, turbut, or halybut; carpe, base, mylet or trowt,  
 Cheven, breme, renewyng;  
 Sole, eles, lampurnes, rost; a leche, a fryture, y make now bost:  
 The second, sotelte sewyng.  
 A man of warre semyng he was,  
 A roughe, a red, angry syre,  
 An hasty man standyng in fyre,  
 As hote as somer by his attyre:  
 His name was Theron, and cleped Cestas.

“THE THIRD COURSE.

“Creme of almond Jardyne, and onamerry, goode and fyne:  
 Potage for þe iij<sup>d</sup>. seruyse.  
 Fresche sturgen, breme de mere, perche in jely, oryent and clere;  
 Welkes, menuse, þus we devise;  
 Shrympis, fresche heryng bryled, pety peueis may not be exiled,  
 Leche fryture, a tansey gyse;  
 The sotelte, a man with sikelle in his hande  
 In a ryvere of watur stande,  
 Wrapped in wedes in werysom wyse,  
 Hauyng no deynteith to daunce:  
 The thrid age of man by liklynes:  
 Hervist we clepe hym, fulle of werynes  
 Zet þer folowythe mo þat we must dres,  
 Regardes riche þat ar fulle of plesaunce.

“THE IIIJ COURSE OF FRUTE.

“Whot appuls and peres with sugre candy,  
 Withe gyngre columbyne, mynsed manerly.

Wafurs with ypocras.

Now þis fest is fynysched, for to make glad chere ;

And laughe so be þat þe use and manere

Not afore tyme be seyn has.

Neverthelesse aftur my simple affeccion

Y must conclude with þe fourth compleccion,

‘Yemps’ þe cold terme of þe yere,

Wyntur, with his lokkys grey, febille and cold,

Syttynge uppon þe stone, both hard and cold,

Nigard in hert and hevy of chere.”

The reader may not infer from the elevation of the “hypocras and wafers with fruit,” to the dignity of “a course,” that ceremonious banquets in Russell’s time had more than three regular courses. It has been already remarked that the liqueur and wafers, when they did not figure in the third course, were dainties “served out of course.” Thus given, as an additional courtesy, rather than as a part of the feast proper, they were the germ of the modern dessert. For the honour accorded to them in the “dinere of fische,” they are indebted to the chef’s want of a fit occasion for the display of the fourth of his series of “grand subtleties,” which he describes with the pride of an inventor as having,

“byn shewed in an howse,

hithe do the gret plesaunce

with oper sightes of gret Nowelte,

þan han be shewed in Rialle feestes of solempnyte,”

the house, of course, being the residence of his gracious master.

Having duly considered the fare which the good Duke Humphrey was wont to set before his guests, readers do not need to be assured that to "dine with his Grace" was not to "go dinnerless," so long as he kept open hall and a royal board. A patron of letters and learned men, the Duke was the founder of the University Library at Oxford, which in the seventeenth century merged in the larger collection of books that commemorates Sir Thomas Bodley's care for learning. In the interval between the "good duke's" death and the beginning of Bodley's fame, Oxonian humour produced the phrase "he has dined with Duke Humphrey," to denote the condition of the studious scholar who, through over-reading the dinner-hour of his hall, missed the earlier meal of meat and porridge, and went till supper without any fare more substantial than the purely intellectual refreshments provided for the students of the ducal library. The phrase which had this significance at the University was soon applied beyond the bounds of Alma Mater to anyone who had dined on "nothing without a welcome."

Of course, when considering the menus of Duke Humphrey's table, and the other bills of fare set forth in this chapter, readers will bear in mind what he has learned about the culinary processes of the period. Three-fourths of the viands were

served in the form of pottages, mortrews, hotch-pots, chewets, and messes. The remainder consisted chiefly of sweet puddings, standing compotes, crustades, and fruit mashes. With the exception of boars' heads, brawns, and joints of venison, the largest birds, such as the swan, crane, and peacock, and the largest fishes, such as the porpoise, sturgeon, and turbot, which creatures were served whole, or with the appearance of entirety, the mediæval table seldom displayed any "pieces" of great magnitude, though haunches of venison were often served whole, quite as often as they were dished in gobbets with frumenty or thickened broth. The same was the case with the pestels of venison and the joints of beef and mutton, which, though figuring in the bills of fare as stately masses of food, were served in stews, hashes, and "stirabouts."

Another thing to be observed in these ancient menus is the distinction drawn between flesh-feasts and fish-banquets. The latter, consisting of fish, fruits, and vegetable preparations, were devoid of flesh; the brawn, which occasionally appears in their menus, being a preparation of fish that was offered as a substitute for brawn of flesh. From the former, fish was in most cases altogether absent, and, in the cases where the viands were not restricted to flesh, fish was used so sparingly as

to be only an incidental and quite subordinate feature of the repast. As a general rule, our mediæval ancestors reserved their fish for the many days on which the rule of the church forbade them to eat any richer viands. And keeping fish for fish-days, they rarely cared to touch it on flesh-days. For the rest, it is enough to remark that the courses of the mediæval table were as devoid of simplicity as the "olios and gallimawfreys" of which they were chiefly composed. Chiefly remarkable for a complete absence of epicurean design, they were mere collections of good things brought together without regard to the special properties of each dish, and with rude insensibility to the finer requirements of the palate. Viands of the most antagonistic qualities were thus put side by side, and the feaster was encouraged to pass from one to another, alike indifferent to gastronomic discords and confusion of flavours, so long as he procured for his palate a diversity of sensations. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that, though they were obscured by barbaric excess of quantity and by ludicrous misarrangements of material, the mediæval table afforded some indications of discernment and good taste. In learning to whet his palate and rouse his stomach with brawn and mustard the epicure of olden time made a long step towards the gastronomic period when critical feeders prepared them-



selves for *pièces de résistance* by playing with light soups, delicate fish, and dainty *entrées*. It is also creditable to his sagacity that, whilst satisfying his sharper cravings with heavier and more substantial fare, he placed the choicer game and wild fowl with the sweets and trifles of the third course.

*A propos* of the mediæval fish-menus, it may be here remarked that fish was not more largely consumed by our ancestors of Catholic times, than by our forefathers of the century immediately following the Reformation. If the consumption of fish was discouraged by the change of religion, which relaxed and modified the ancient rules of fasting, it was on the other hand stimulated by civil ordinances for the protection of fisheries, and for the economical use of several kinds of food. Whilst the Friday of every week was almost universally kept as a fish-day in Elizabethan England, either from religious sentiment, or out of regard for ancient usage, there was a general compliance with an order for the same diet on Saturdays. Not content with two weekly fish-days, Queen Elizabeth recommended her subjects to subsist chiefly on the same food on every Wednesday. At the same time fish was the diet of the Lenten season, and of the special fast-days of the church. Thomas Cogan did not over-state the case when he remarked, in

1596, that half the year was set apart for the consumption of fish.\*

Nor is it so certain as some social illustrators suppose, that the consumption of fish is much less liberal at the present time than it was in the Elizabethan age. Victorian England has, indeed, no days to which fish-diet has been assigned by civil proclamation; and it is only in the circles of High-Churchmen and Catholics that the ancient fasting-days are still kept with the eating of fish. But on the other hand, fish has become so general an article of daily diet, that it is an ingredient of almost every meal set on the table of a prosperous household. It figures at the breakfast-table in smoking cutlets and dishes of fried bloaters; it is

\* Now concerning fish, which is no small part of our sustenance in this realme of England. And that flesh might be more plentifull and better cheape, two daies in the week, that is Fryday and Saturday, are specially appointed to fish, and now of late yeares by the providence of our prudent Queen Elizabeth, the Wednesday is also in a manner restrained to the same order, not for any religion or holiness supposed to be in the eating of fish rather than flesh, but only for the civill policie as I have said. . . And no doubt, if all daies appointed for that purpose were duly observed, but that flesh and fish both would be much more plentifull, and beare lesse price than they doe. For, accounting the Lent Season, and all fasting daies in the yeare together with Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, you shall see that the one halfe of the yeare is ordeined to eat fish in. But here I must crave a pardon of divines, that they will give me leave to utter mine opinion touching abstinence from meats."—*Vide* THOMAS COGAN'S "HAVEN OF HEALTH," 1596. How the more regular obser-

seldom absent at luncheon ; it never fails to appear with the soup at dinner. No supper is complete without oysters and lobster salad, when these choicest shell-fish are "in season." The case was different in olden time. So long as people were constrained more or less forcibly to eat fish, on certain days and at certain seasons, they avoided it at other times as an inopportune viand, if they did not actually regard it with the repugnance which the dainty are apt to conceive for diet which they have taken on compulsion. Anyhow, the daily and incessant consumption of fish in the modern cuisine is probably not less advantageous to the fisheries than the periodic and intermittent consumption of the same food in former times.

veance of fish-days should have made fish cheaper and more abundant, is less obvious to his readers of to-day than to the worthy Author of "The Haven."

## CHAPTER IX.

## WARNERS AND SUBTLETIES, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

“These iij sotelties devised in towse,  
 wher þey byn shewed in an howse,  
 hithe doth gret plesaunce,  
 with ober sightes of gret Nowelte,  
 þan han be shewed in Rialle feestes of solempnyte,  
 A notable cost be ordynaunce.”

*Vide* JOHN RUSSELL'S “BOKE OF NURTURE.”

“These curious decorations of the Old English Table, were nothing more than devices in sugar and paste, which, in general, as in the case before us, had some allusion to the circumstances of the entertainments, and *closed* the service of the dishes. The *warners* were ornaments of the same nature, which preceded them. It seems probable that the splendid dessert frames of our days, ornamented with the quaint and heterogeneous combinations of Chinese architecture, Arcadian swains, fowl, fish, beasts and fanciful representations from Heathen mythology, are only the remains of, or, if more agreeable to the modern ear, refinements upon the Old English Soteltees.—*Vide* “ANTIQUITATES CULINARIÆ.”

SOMETHING more should be said of the Warners and Subtleties which were the most conspicuous of the several fanciful adornments of the Old English table. Like the barley-sugar bird-cage which Albert Smith saw on half-a-hundred different supper-tables during three successive seasons of Victorian London, they were made for the pleasure of the eye rather than of the palate. Guests were expected to admire, without demolishing them.

It does not appear that they were ever eaten; and they often contained materials by no means toothsome. In earlier times, composed chiefly or altogether of sugar and pastry, they were at a later date the contrivance of the joiner and worker in pasteboard, rather than of the cook.

Rising several feet above the table they were bright with paint, and with curiously-blazoned flags that gave the clue to their meanings. Sometimes they were mere combinations of escutcheons and other heraldic devices. But they more frequently comprised figures grouped and adorned so as to illustrate the fables of chivalric romance, or enforce honest maxims, or render an apt compliment to one or more of the chief partakers of the banquet. Martial exploits and the triumphs of the chase were thus celebrated in confectionery. At other times the subtlety would exhibit a scene of sacred story, or call attention to a recent incident of the domestic life of an honoured person. The reader has already seen John Russell's subtleties of the four seasons. At a bridal feast, one at least of the subtleties always pointed with greater or less (usually less) delicacy to what dear old Samuel Richardson calls in one of his novels, "the parturient circumstances of matrimony." For instance, the author of "For to serve a lord," (written near the close of the 15th century), directs that one of the chief adorn-



ments of the Bridal Banquet\* should be a cake, surmounted by the figure of a lady in urgent need of the doctor. The mention of this adornment for the bridal table reminds one of the device exhibited by the Intendant of Gascony at a banquet to cele-

\* "A BRIDAL BANQUET.

"For to make a feste for a bryde,

"*The first course*:—brawne with the borys hed, lying in a felde, hegge about with a scriptur on this wyse —

"Welcombe you bretheren godely in this hall,

Joy be unto you all,

That ene this day it is now fall!

That worthy lorde that lay in an oxe stalle

Meynteyne your husbande and you with your gystys alle.

Ifurmente with veneson, swanne, pigge,

Ifesaunte, with a grete custarde, with a sotelte.

A lambe standyng in scriptour, saying on this wyse:

'I mekely unto you, sovrayne, am sente,  
to dwell with you, and ever be present.'

"*The second course*.—Veneson in broth, viande Ryalle, veneson roasted, crane, cony, a bake mete, leche damaske, with a sotelte: An antelope sayng on a sele that seith with scriptour,

'beith all glad and merry at this messe,  
and prayeth for the king and all his.'

"*The thirde course*.—Creme of almondys, losynge in syruppe, betoure, partridge, plover, snyte, poulder veal, leche veal well is in sotelte, roches in sotelte, plaice in sotelte, a bake mete with a sotelte; an angel with a scriptour, 'thanke all, god, of this feste.'

"*The iiij course*.—Payne puff, chese, freynes, brede hote, with a cake, and a wiflying in childe-bed, with a scriptour saing in this wise, 'I am comyng toward your bryde. If ye dinte onys loke to me ward, I wene ye nedys muste.'

"*Another course or servise*.—Brawne with mustard, vmblys of a dere or of a sepe; swanne, capoun, lambe,

brate the birth of the Duke of Burgundy. "The Intendant," says Horace Walpole, "treated the noblesse with a dinner and a dessert, the latter of which concluded with a representation, by wax figures moved by clockwork, of the whole labour of the Dauphiness, and the happy birth of an heir to the monarchy."

The warners and subtleties of the Tudor cooks surpassed the subtle contrivances of earlier artistes in magnitude and elaborateness. At the several banquets attending the Inthronization of Archbishop Nevill, every table had one of these cumbrous ornaments, that were made of half-a-dozen uneatable materials, as well as of sugar and pastry. At the superior tables the quaint structures were changed with the courses. One of the warners, representing several scenes, was brought to the table on three separate boards, each of which sustained an enormous and quaintly fabricated toy. The king "sytying in the parliamment with hys lordes about hym in their robes, and the Chancellor

Here again, the cook gives a *fourth* course, consisting of little but a cake, cheese, and *the subtlety* which raised the after-cates to the dignity of a course. The introduction of the cheese is notable, it being one of the earliest mentions of a fashion still followed. As for the "other course," (a mere suggestion for an "out of course," prelude or epilogue), it was no regular course. Though drawn by an innovator, this menu was for a banquet of *three* courses, with additions.

of Oxford, with other doctors about hym," were represented in one of the compartments of the grand device, which comprised "eight towers, embattled and made with flowers, standyng on every towre a bedil in his habite, with his staffe." At the table provided for the Master of the Rolls, the Archdeacons, and Doctors, the grand subtlety was "a church Abbaye lyke, with many altares, and a chayre set at the hygh Altare, and a doctor syttyng therein, with his backe turned to the altare, lyke a judge of the Arches, with the certaine doctors, and proctors pleadyng causes of the lawes of the Church before the sayde judge."

The taste for cumbrous contrivances of this kind prevailed throughout the Tudor period; and, far from languishing under the Stuarts, it was productive of greater absurdities in the seventeenth than in any earlier time of our culinary annals. The civil troubles of that century were unfavourable to cooks and their art. Master Robert May, chef to Lord Montague, Lord Lumley, Sir Kenelm Digby, as well as to other lavish amphytrions of his time, speaks pathetically of the injury done to gastronomic science by the "unhappy and culinary disturbances of those times." Indeed, the venerable cook\* would

\* "Though I may be envied," he observes, grandly, "by some that only value the private interests above posterity and the publick good, yet God and my own conscience would not permit me to bury these,

have us believe that all higher cookery would have perished from the land during the Commonwealth, had it not been for "the *Mæcena's* and patrons of the generous art," who sheltered him in their kitchens during a gloomy epoch, and afforded him opportunities for accomplishing those "triumphs and trophies of cookery" which still render him famous. Able in every department of his art, Robert May was especially great in imagining "novelties," and enlarging the sphere of "subtle diversions."

This artiste and his patrons cannot be fully appreciated by the student who has never perused "The Accomplished Cook," which, whilst exhibiting the resources of "the generous art," abounds with illustrations of Caroline society.

In the fulness of his powers, Robert May executed the choicest of his triumphs, as a fit prelude to a Court supper on Twelfth-night. Having modelled a ship of war in pasteboard, he filled it with toy guns coated with sugar and pastry, tricked it gaily with flags and streamers, and sent it into action by means set forth in the following passage :—

my experiences, with my silver hairs in the grave."—*Vide* "THE ACCOMPLISHED COOK, OR THE ART AND MYSTERY OF COOKERY." Wherein the whole Art is revealed. Approved by fifty years experience and industry of Robert May, in his attendance on several persons of honour, 1660.

"Place your ship," he says, "firm in the great charger; then make a salt round about it, and stick therein egg-shells full of sweet water, you may by a great pin take out all the meat of the egg by blowing, and then fill it up with rose-water; then on another charger have the proportion of a stage made of coarse paste, with a broad arrow on the side of him, and his body filled with claret wine; in another charger at the end of the stag have the proportion of a castle with battlements, portcullises, gates and drawbridges made of paste-board, the guns and kickses, and covered with paste as the former; place it at a distance from the ship to fire at each other. The stag being placed between them with egg-shells of sweet water (as before) placed in the salt. At each side of the charger wherein is the stag, place a pye made of coarse paste, in one of which let there be some live frogs, in each other some live birds; make these pyes of coarse paste filled with bran, and yellowed over with saffron or the yolks of eggs, guild them over in spots, as also the stag, the ship and the castle; bake them and place them with guilt bay-leaves on turrets and tunnels of the castles and pyes; being baked, make a hole in the bottom of your pyes, take out the bran, put in your frogs, and birds, and close up the holes with the same coarse paste, then cut the lids neatly up; to be taken off the tunnels: being all placed in order upon the table, before you fire the trains of powder, order it so that some of the ladies may be persuaded to pluck an arrow out of the stag, then will the claret wine follow, as blood runneth out of a wound. This being done with admiration to the beholders, after some short pause, fire the train of the castle, that the pieces all of one side may go off, then fire the trains of one side of the ship as in battel, next turn the chargers, and by degrees fire the trains of each other side as before. This done, to sweeten the stink of the powder, let the ladies take the egg-shells full of sweet waters, and throw them at each other. All dangers being seemingly over, by this time you may suppose they will desire to see what is in the pyes; when lifting first the lid off one pye, out skip some frogs, which make the ladies to skip and shriek; next after the other pye, when come out the birds, who by a natural instinct flying into the lights, will put out the candles, so that what



with the flying birds and the skipping frogs, the one above, the other beneath, will cause much delight and pleasure to the whole company; at length the candles are lighted, a banquet brought in, the musick sounds, and everyone with much delight and content rehearses their actions in the former passages. These were formerly the delights of the nobility, before good house-keeping had left England, and the sword really acted that which was only counterfeited in such honest and laudable exercises as these."

In filling egg-shells with scented water, Robert May followed the example of the Italian artistes, who at carnivals and other festal times were wont to prepare scores upon scores of the same fragile missiles for the hands of sportive ladies. When Dudley North, the Lord Keeper's brother, visited Italy,\* in the time of Charles the Martyr, he was greatly diverted by the spectacle of gentlewomen pelting one another, as well as their cavaliers, in the public ways, with egg-shells containing sweet water. To the same country, Robert May was also indebted for the "surprise pies," which caused the fair admirers of his culinary extravaganza to "skip and shreek."

\* "Now is the time," wrote the merchant of noble birth, "between Christmas and Lent, which is called Carnival. The people use all the mirth they can devise; such as passing in masquerade clothes, one after one, and another after another manner; tossing eggshells with sweet water, where they see women they like; and thus tossing eggs at first, the women will reach them till the basket be divided betwixt them, and then to pelting each other they go; and so are all Sundays and holidays spent.—*Vide* "LIFE OF THE HON. SIR DUDLEY NORTH."

In the earlier years of the eighteenth century, ornaments, bearing any close resemblance to the manners and subtleties of the feudal period, were seldom placed on fashionable tables. They might still be seen in civic halls on gaudy days; but high life had replaced them with more durable and less cumbrous devices of china and porcelain. Then came the day of harlequins, gondoliers, and shepherdesses in ceramic ware. The writings of Addison and Walpole\* contain allusions to several successive fashions for the embellishment of the festal board. Shepherdesses, wandering in groves of paper and silk thread, were superseded by pastoral scenes of a more realistic character. For awhile there was a rage for culinary representations of cattle browsing on fat pasture, farm-yards, and rustic cottages. A

\* "The last branch of our fashion, into which the close observation of nature has been produced, is our desserts. Jellies, biscuits, sugar-plums, and creams have long since given way to harlequins, gondoliers, Turks, Chinese, and shepherdesses of Saxon china. But these, unconnected, and only seeming to wander among groves of curled paper and silk flowers, were soon discovered to be too insipid and unmeaning. By degrees, meadows of cattle, of the same brittle material, spread themselves over the table; cottages rose in barley-sugar; Neptunes in cars of cockle-shells triumphed over oceans of looking-glass or seas of silver tissue. Women of the first quality came home from Chevenix's, laden with dolls and babies, not for their children, but for their housekeeper. At last, even these puerile puppetshows are sinking into disuse, and more manly ways of concluding repasts are established. Gigantic figures succeed to pigmies."—*Vide* LORD ORFORD'S "WORKS."

few seasons later, fashionable humour, taking a mythological turn, commissioned Neptunes of painted sugar to drive triumphal cars over seas of looking-glass. Dolls that could wink their eyes and cry "mamma," and wax babies of alarmingly natural proportions and aspect, had their brief hour of favour with Amphitryons and hostesses, but were soon discarded on a fresh outbreak of the mythological mania, for monstrous dishes of gods and goddesses, that required the services of a detachment of engineers for their safe transference from the pantry to the banqueting-room. "Imaginez-vous que milord n'a pas voulu faire ôter le plafond," exclaimed the indignant chef who had produced one of these preposterous structures, only to learn that his master, Lord Albemarle, would not allow the ceiling of his dining-room to be destroyed, in order that the group of deities might be suitably placed on a supper-table.

Under the Regency, and after the Regent's example, fashionable folk called the gardener to the aid of the cook, and brightened their tables with the choicest flowers of the conservatory, an excellent fashion, that in these days of dinners *à la Russe* covers the board with objects which delight the eye, when the epicures' grosser appetites have been satisfied. At Carlton House, also, the greatest gentleman of Europe astonished his friends by seating

them at a table so constructed that, whilst regaling themselves with the most delicate works of culinary art, they looked on a purling rivulet, populous with gold fish, and banked with moss and flowers. But though applauded for a season, this singular aquarium was soon discarded, and should be remembered merely as a costly freak of the royal epicure, who chiefly distinguished himself amongst table decorators by using fruit and flowers more liberally and skilfully than any previous Amphitryon of modern England.

Even in this age of revivalism, when ceramic taste is restoring the long-neglected blue of the willow-pattern pottery, it is not probable that the Warners and Subtleties of olden time will reappear at festal tables. Approving the changes which have successively swept away the stupendous structures of paste-board and pastry, the antique groups and cumbrous dishes of the old entertainers, universal sentiment has declared in favour of leaves and flowers as the proper garniture for the epicurean board. The same good taste also requires that in the arrangement of these natural ornaments care should be taken to place them above or below the line of vision. However beautiful it may be in its proper place, the decoration which breaks the festal view, and puts one's opposite neighbours out of sight, is a hindrance to *vis-à-vis* conversation,

and an irritating interference with the rights of guests.

No more effective obstacle to enjoyment can be produced by human ingenuity than one of those long baskets, closely packed with high, leafy plants, which are sometimes set on dinner-tables for pictorial effect. Under the cold shade of such an impenetrable thicket, the brightest wit ceases to shine, and the dazzling belle loses her radiance. A table-talker might as well pelt a haystack with epigrams as throw *jeux d'esprit* against such a wall of garden-stuff. Unable to see the faces on the other side of the leafy covert, he misses the smiles which should encourage and reward his humour; and feeling himself cut off from human sympathy, he even lacks spirit to cheer the clouded sharer of his depressing position. Bearing these facts in mind, the artistic decorator of a festal board prefers cut to growing flowers, and whilst placing the bright blossoms only a few inches above the level of the table, disposes his ferns so that guests on opposite sides of the plane look at one another beneath the drooping fronds.

At present, the Christmas Trees, planted on supper-tables for the delight of children, are the only remains of the intrusive decorations which were so conspicuous at the feasts of the Old English. But in the smaller confections and toy-sweetmeats



of our tables—such as crackers, bonbons, chocolate-drops, and “kisses”—may still be seen the vestiges of a fashion that centuries since scattered curious trifles of the same kind over the groaning board. In the fabrication of lozenges and minute sugar-toys, the confectioners of olden time expended much care, and often exhibited more of ingenuity than delicacy. In spite of all that has been urged against the levity and impudence of “the girl of the period,” it is certain that she would not fail to exhibit signs of abhorrence and outraged dignity if she were offered at a ball-supper such whimsical sweet-meats as gallant knights in the palmiest days of chivalry used to press upon their dames and damoiselles. As for the mottoes of our bon-bons, it is needless to observe that they are miniature reproductions of the “resons” and sentimental “florishes” of the mediæval subtleties.

## CHAPTER X.

## CARVING AND CARVERS.

"Take your knyfe in your hande, and cut browne in ye dysshe as it lyeth, and laye it on your souerayne's trenchour and se there be mustarde."—"THE BOKE OF KERUYNGE" (WYNKYN DE WORDE.)

"Now, fadir, feire falle ye, and crist yew haue in cure,  
For of þe nurture of keruyng y suppose þat y be sure.  
JOHN RUSSELL'S "BOKE OF NURTURE."

"Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,  
And carf before his fader at the table.

CHAUCER'S TALES: "THE YONGE SQUIER."

SO long as English fare consisted chiefly of stews and minced meats, with other messes that would at the present time be helped without a knife, there was small need of a carver at an ordinary banquet. But though the feudal table afforded him comparatively few occasions for the exhibitions of his skill, the carver found employment at ceremonious feasts, and his office was honoured throughout the Roman or spoon-period of our ancient cookery. It was he who sliced the brawn and venison and other large pieces of the mediæval feast. When served whole, the swan and peacock were cut artistically by his gleaming knife. And when they were put on the board with only the appearance of entirety, he divided their nicely arranged parts with all the

formal “flourishes” of a carver actually dissecting a royal bird. The wild fowl and smaller ground game, which were usually put whole on the table, afforded him other occasions for showing artistic adroitness and a precise knowledge of the rules and terms of his craft.

In days when the offices of footmen and other male menials were filled by gentle serving-men, he was always a gentleman of honest lineage, and not seldom a person of noble degree, though of a rank inferior to that of his employer. The four carvers and cup-bearers of Edward the Fourth’s special table were bannerets or bachelor-knights;\* and at the banquets attending Archbishop Nevill’s inthronization, the chief carver was Lord Willoughby, some of whose fellow-servants† at the same fes-

\* “In the ‘*Liber Niger Domus Regis Angliæ*,’ (*i.e.*, Edward the Fourth), containing orders for the Royal Household, anno 1478, we read, ‘Bannerets or Bachelor Knights to be carvers or cup-bearers, (four).’”—*Vide* SAMUEL PEGGE’S “*CURIALIA MISCELLANEA*.”

† The staff of chief-servants at the festival comprised the following nobles, knights and gentlemen:—“First, the Earle of Warwicke, as Stewarde; the Earle of Northumberlande, as Treasurer; the Lorde Hastings, as Comptroller; the Lorde Wylloughby, Carver; the Lorde of Buckyngham, Cup-bearer; Sir Richarde Strangwiche, Sewer; Sir Walter Worley, Marshall and viii other knyghtes of the Hall; also viii Squyers, besides other two Sewers; Sir John Malyvery, Panter; the Sergeant of the Kinge’s Ewery, to be Ewerer; Greystoke and Nevell, keepers of the Cubbords; Sir John Breaknock, Surveyor of the Hall.”—*Vide* “*INTHRONIZATION OF ARCHBISHOP NEVILL*.”

tival were superior to him in wealth and social quality.

Whilst his manner conformed to the ceremoniousness, the carver's terms accorded with the quaint pedantry of the period whose chefs were schoolmen, and whose scholars delighted in fantastic phraseology. In the "Boke of Nurture," John Russell gives us a chapter on "kervyng of flesh," and another on the "kervyng of fische," from which it appears that Duke Humphrey's carver had a distinct set of observances for almost every "creature" that came under his knife. He might not touch venison with his hand; but having sliced the "piece" deftly, he put the juiciest slice on his lord's plate, by means of his broad-bladed carving-knife, and without the assistance of a fork. Birds he might raise by their legs with his left hand before dismembering them; but his skill was seen in the quickness and certainty with which he poised "each portion" on his knife, and conveyed it to the plate without touching it with his fingers. At moments of difficulty he had recourse to the spoon; but in days prior to the introduction of table-forks, the perfect carver used the spoon as little as possible, and would have died of shame, had he been seen to put his fingers upon a viand in a way prohibited by the laws of his art. It was expressly conceded by those laws that he might touch beef and mutton

with his left hand; but he always exercised this privilege discreetly and with sensitive care for his lord's feelings and his own honour. With the knife, also, he was wondrously expert in removing sinew and unsightly bits from each slice. To the youth aspiring to distinguish himself in courtly service, John Russell says:—

“ Withe youre lift hande touche beeff, chyne, motonn, as is a-fore  
said,

& pare hit clene or þat ye kerve, or hit to your lord be layd;  
and as it is showed afore, beware of upbrayde;  
alle fumosite, salt, senow, raw, aside be hit convayde.”

It was also customary for the carver, when he had cut and prepared a slice of meat, to dissect it into four strips, holding together at the end, so as to resemble in some degree an obsolete instrument of punishment—the Scotch tawse. Provided with such a slice, the courtly feaster lifted it with his fingers, using the undivided end as a handle, whilst he ate the four long pieces. Having eaten the strips, he of course laid aside the “handle,” which he had touched, as unfit for the palate of a nice feeder. Addressing his apt pupil on this matter, John Russell says:—

“ But furbermore enforme yow y must in metis kervynge,  
Mynse ye must iiij lees, to oon morselle hangynge,  
þat youre mastir may take with ij fyngurs in his sawce dippyng,  
and so no napkyn, brest, ne boreclothe, in anywise embrowynge.”



From this order, and many similar directions for the performance of work which would not now-a-days devolve on the mere distributor of a dish, it is obvious that the carver of "The Boke of Nurture" was a thoughtful "helper" of meat, as well as an operator on *pièces de résistance*. A valet bent on ministering to the comfort and caprices of his special master, rather than a performer acting theatrically to the admiration of a score spectators, he is a vigilant, quick-handed, ready "waiter," not a stately illustrator of the laws of carving. Faultless as an attendant on a solitary *gourmet*, he would perhaps have failed in dramatic effectiveness, as chief carver of plumed peacocks at a ceremonious regalement in a crowded hall.

"The Boke of Kervynge" (Wynkyn de Worde), published at the close of Henry the Seventh's reign, is perhaps more generally known than "The Boke of Nurture," which it resembles so closely in phraseology that it is little else than a prose version of such parts of Russell's poetical performance as relate to culinary matters and the service of the table. Whether the anonymous fabricator of this tract was only the shameless plagiarist of John Russell's superior work, or whether both authors made free use of some earlier scribe,\* are questions that antiquaries hesitate to answer, and few readers

\* The following lines in the epilogue to the "Boke of Nurture,"

of this page will care to consider. But, whatever may have been the source of his information, Wynkyn de Worde's hack-writer may be thanked for giving us a complete list of terms used by professional carvers.

#### TERMES OF A KERVER.

Breke that dere; lesche that brawne; rere that goose; lyft that swanne; sauce that capon; spoyle that henne; frusshe that chekyn; unbrace that mal-larde; unlace that cony; dysmembre that heron; displaye that crane; dysfygure that pecocke; unjoynt that bytture; untache that curlew; alaye that fesande; wynges that partryche; wynges that quayle; mynce that plover; thye that pegyon; border that

if taken literally, prove that Russell was not the original author, but only the transcriber of the poem:—

“ And if so þat any be founde, as þrouz myn necligence,  
Cast be cawse on my copy, rude and bare of eloquence,  
Whiche to drawe out (I) haue do my besy diligence,  
Redily to reforme hit by reson and bettur sentence,  
As for ryme or reson, þe forewryter was not to blame,  
For as he founde hit aforne hym, so wrote he þe same,  
And þaugh he or y in oure matere digres or degrade,  
Blame neither of us. For we neuyre hit made.”

But this disclaimer of originality may be only an exercise of literary artifice, common in authors of every age, and frequent in modern novelists, who often proclaim themselves only the “editors” of their own tales. It is probable that Wynkyn de Worde's tract was only the reproduction in type of an old prose MS., which John Russell amended and threw into verse.

pasty; thye that wodcocke; thye all manner of small byrdes; tymbre that fyre; tyere that egge; chyne that samon; strynge that lampraye; splatte that pyke; sauce that tenche; splaye that breame; syde that haddocke; tuske that barbell; culpon that troute; fynne that cheven; trausene that ele; traunche that sturgeon; undertraunche that purpos; tayme that crabbe; barbe that lopster. Here hendeth the goodly termes.

This list accords with what has been already said as to the creatures ordinarily submitted to the carver, in times when common meats were not commonly served in large pieces. Making no mention of what would now-a-days be called "joints," it contains no terms for the orderly carving of beef, mutton, veal, pork. Russell, indeed, gives directions for the cutting and distribution of those common viands; but the carver refused to recognize them as proper subjects for the exercise of his graceful art.

The same terms, employed by carvers of centuries prior to Wynkyn de Worde's time, survived the fashions of the Tudor period, and the changing humours of Caroline England. Appearing in several of the successive cookery books of Elizabeth of England, they may be found in Robert May's "Accomplisht Cook," and other gastronomic works of the Restoration period. The eighteenth century

was passing ere they slowly dropped from the talk of old-fashioned tables.

When a change of gastronomic taste, for which the introduction of the fork was largely though not altogether accountable, had covered the English table with "joints," and increased the demand for skilful carvers, it was not long before the labour of carving was transferred from gentle serving-men, specially dexterous with the knife, to ladies seated at the upper end of the festal table.

In excluding womankind from banquets that were not of a private character, mediæval society seems to have followed a fashion still observed, with occasional departures from ordinary usage, in modern England. Ladies, indeed, brightened the entertainments which celebrated the enthronization of Archbishop Nevill, in Edward the Fourth's time; and we have noticed other feasts at which women displayed their beauty, and wit, and brave adornments. Of course bridal feasts, the grandest of all mediæval festivals, required the presence of the fair sex. But, as a general rule, the quasi-public dinners and suppers of Feudal England were enjoyed by the lords of creation in the absence of their dames and damoiselles. In the lower grades of good society, it was enough for "madam" to superintend the operations of her cooks and servitors in the kitchen, whilst the "master" and his comrades enjoyed the

good cheer which she provided for them. And even when they appeared at table, the ladies of chivalric time did not receive such consideration and courteous treatment as are accorded to them universally in the modern England from which chivalry is said to have departed. The mediæval entertainer of a party, consisting of persons of both sexes, was at no pains to match his guests, so that there was a cavalier for each gentlewoman, or even to assign a gallant partner to each lady, when the number of male guests would enable him to do so. The convenience of the men, rather than the pleasure of the women, was considered in the arrangements for seating the guests. If the table consisted of a single board, the ladies, unless their rank demanded exceptional courtesy, seated themselves wherever they could find room, and often that room was found at the lower end of the dining-hall. If the single table was divided by the "salt," a gentlewoman often found herself sitting with the inferior guests "below" the line of honour, whilst men of no better extraction, and of worse manners, enjoyed the daintier fare "above the salt." And when the table consisted of several separate boards, it often happened that the women of the party were placed at a table by themselves, without a gallant of any kind to bear them company.

In the well-known picture of the King's Lynn



peacock-feast (taken from an old brass in the church of St. Margaret, Lynn Regis, Norfolk), the party consists of eleven feasters seated in a line on one side of a long table. Eight of the eleven feasters are men, and probably the three ladies are indebted for their honourable places at the board to the fact that they are not members of the Amphitryon's household. The tall lady who, discharging the function of chief waitress, appears at one of end of the table with a dished peacock in her hands, is probably the mistress of the house. The ministering women at the other end of the table, are also of gentle degree—as their dress and coiffure attest—though they do not presume to seek places at the board which they cover with good cheer.

At the banquets attending Archbishop Nevill's inthronization, all the tables laid in the "Hall" were occupied by men; but there was an imposing show of noble womankind in the "cheefe Chamber," the "seconde Chamber," and the "great Chamber," At the first table of the cheefe Chamber, the Duke of Gloucester, as the king's brother and representative, had the place of honour, with the Duchess of Suffolk on his right, and the Countess of Westmoreland on his left-hand. Three other ladies—the Countess of Northumberland, and two of the Lord Warwick's daughters, also sat at the same table. Hence the guests at the royal table were one man

and five ladies. None but ladies sat at the second table, which afforded accommodation to sixteen fair dames, "the Baronnesse of Graystocke, with three other Baronneses, and xii other ladies." Eighteen gentlewomen—maids of honour in attendance on the ladies at the royal table and the second table—were provided with seats, but no cavaliers, at the third table of the chief room. Thus in the whole room there was (gentle servitors excepted) only one man to thirty-nine ladies. If the Duke provided small talk for the Duchess and Countess who supported him, he can scarcely have offered many courtesies to his other mess-mates, and at the same time have paid adequate attention to the good cheer.

The "seconde Chamber" contained only two tables, and none but ladies were received at them. The feasters at the superior of these boards were the elder Duchess of Suffolk, the Countess of Warwick, the Countess of Oxford, the Lady Hastings, and the Lady Fitzhugh; the second table being laid for the entertainment of "the Ladie Huntley, the Ladie Strangwicke, and viii other ladies." Whether the Dowager Duchess of Suffolk acted as president at this dinner-party of fifteen ladies, and whether the fair feasters delivered speeches in honour of holy church, when they had satisfied their appetite for food and drink, the

chronicler omits to state; but in the absence of mess-mates of the sterner sex, it is probable that the ladies at table were a rather lifeless and silent assembly, when they had exchanged opinions on matters of toilet and housekeeping, and on the various shortcomings of their servants. Anyhow, we may be sure that the company was less shrilly oratorical than a ladies' dinner-party in Fifth Avenue, New York. Hilarious loquacity was not "the mode" of dinner-parties at the best houses of Feudal England. On the other hand, it should be remembered that though they had no cavalier seated beside them to whisper flatteries and co-operate in flirtation, the ladies of the "seconde Chamber" could, without indecorum, gossip with the waiters, who were all gentlemen of good family.

Of the three tables in the "great Chamber," two were laid for companies altogether made up of men, and the third was provided for twenty-eight guests—fourteen gentlewomen and fourteen gentlemen of unrecorded names. The occupants of the high table in this chamber being four bishops, and the second being assigned to fourteen temporal peers, it may be assumed that the third party of twenty-eight comprised only ladies and gentlemen of unexceptionable quality.

Even so late as Charles the Second's time, when

they had long held possession of the upper end of private table, it was usual to seat the ladies apart from the men, at separate tables, and sometimes in separate chambers, on occasions of quasi-public festivity. Thus, when Mr. Samuel Pepys went in his second-best suit to Sir Anthony Bateman's mayoral banquet at the Guildhall, he tells us that he inspected the "tables prepared for the ladies," which were set in a room for the special accommodation of the fair feasters. On that day no man dined in this room, though gentlemen were permitted to loiter through it and stare at the eating ladies. "After I had dined," the diarist continues, "I and Creed rose, and went up and down the house, and up to the lady's room, and there stayed gazing upon them. But though there were many and fine, both young and old, yet I could not discern one handsome face, which was very strange. I expected musique, but there was none, but only trumpets and drums, which displeased me. The dinner, it seems, is made by the Mayor and two sheriffs for the time being, the Mayor paying one half, and they the other. And the whole, says Proby, is reckoned to come to about seven or eight hundred pounds at most. Being tired with looking upon a company of ugly women, Creed and I went away, took coach, and through Cheapside, and there saw the pageants, which were very silly."

Mr. Pepys was sadly out of temper throughout the day. Having left his new velvet-lined cloak at home "because of the crowde," he felt himself under-dressed, and consequently was out of conceit with himself and the whole world. Moreover being "under a vowe" he could not cheer himself with wine, though with an uneasy conscience he sipped a little hippocras. The ladies would not have been so ugly to his eyes, had he worn his bravest costume. Had he drunk wine, he would have found the pageants less "silly," the drums and trumpets less "displeasing," the table-furniture less defective, and the fare at the Merchant Strangers' board more to his taste.

In Elizabethan England, when gallimawfreys had given way to the substantial fare of our later cookery, it was the custom at private dinners to place the principal joints and masses of meat at the upper end of the table, above the salt, so that the chief guests could see clearly the best of the good cheer, and also appropriate the choicest cuts, before the inferior folk below the joint of honour were served. Fashion having thus decided that the "carving should be done on the table," the ladies were invited to the top of the table, not out of gallantry, but in order that they should do the work which could no longer be executed conveniently by professional carvers. It may cost the



reader a struggle to admit that our ancestors had no more chivalric purpose in view when they promoted woman to her proper place at the festal board. But there is no doubt as to the fact. The new ordering of places was the result of masculine selfishness and insolence, rather than masculine gallantry. Just as in mediæval society the lady of the house rendered service to her guests by discharging the functions of a gentle serving-woman, in preparing dishes for their enjoyment, and even in bringing them to table with her own hands, so in Elizabethan life she went up to the top of her table, and seated herself among the first guests, in order that she might serve them as a carver. At the same time, the number of "great pieces" requiring several carvers, she brought other ministering ladies to the upper end of the table where the grand joints were exhibited.

Having been thus called to the top of the table for her lord's convenience instead of her own dignity, the mistress of the house soon made it a point of honour to occupy the place, which had in the first instance been conceded to her as a servant, rather than as principal lady. Ere long, with her characteristic cleverness in making the best of things and stating her own case in the way most agreeable to her self-love, she regarded

her carver's stool as a throne of state, and affected to preside over the company, though the terms of her commission only authorized her to help them to food.

It was the same with the ladies whom she invited to assist her in the work of carving. Losing sight of its uncomplimentary cause, they regarded their promotion to the higher places as a testimony to their worthiness. To carve, ere long, became with them a point of honour, rather than an affair of duty ; and having for the discharge of hospitable functions acquired the superior seats, they, in course of time, excluded the men altogether from the upper end of the table. In the middle of the seventeenth century the ladies of a dinner or supper entered the banqueting-room before the men ; and when they had seated themselves at the top of the table, *i.e.*, the end of the table farthest from the door, the cavaliers who followed them shared the space left to them at the inferior part of the board.

In his entertaining "Lives" of his three notable brothers—Lord Keeper Guildford, Sir Dudley North, the Turkey merchant, and Dr. John North, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge—Roger North makes several allusions to the fashion which assigned the top of the table to the fair sex, and also mentions particularly the ungallant considerations which occasioned their promotion to the chief places.

On being entertained at Badminton by his Grace of Beaufort, the Lord Keeper Guildford saw the Duchess with her two daughters *only* at the head of her oblong table.\* Whether the Duchess carved any dish, the biographer omits to state, though he is careful to say that *gentlemen* were the only liveried servants in attendance, and that differing from the common use, Badminton custom forbade guests to sit over the oblong table "with tobacco and healths." It is improbable that Her Grace, who in her pride would allow no ladies but her own daughters to sit with her at the top of the table, condescended to do with her own hands any of the work which the gentle serving-men and the ladies of inferior degree, below the salt, could readily perform.

\* "The ordinary pastime of the ladies was in a gallery on the other side, where she," (*i.e.*, the duchess) "had divers gentlewomen commonly at work upon embroidery and fringe-making; for all the beds of state were made and finished in the house. The meats were very neat, and not gross; no servants in livery attended, but those called gentlemen only; and, in the several kinds, even down to the small beer, nothing could be more choice than that table was. It was an oblong, and not an oval; and the duchess, with her two daughters *only*, sat at the upper end. If the gentlemen chose a glass of wine, the civil offers were made to go down into the vaults, which were very large and sumptuous, or servants, at a sign given, attended with salvers, &c., and many a brisk went round about; but no sitting at table with tobacco and healths, as the common use is." *Vide* ROGER NORTH'S "LIFE OF LORD-KEEPER GUILDFORD."

But that the Lord-Keeper would have required his wife to carve at his ceremonious banquets, had she survived the date of his instalment in the Marble Chair, readers may learn from Roger's account of his grandest brother's hospitalities. When the keeper of "the pestiferous lump of metal" gave a dinner, Roger—who, though a fairly successful barrister and Recorder of Bristol, was also his lordship's accountant and major-domo—used to sit at the head of the table, "for want of a lady to carve." Save as a chief retainer of his lordship's household, bound to make himself generally useful, Roger had no title to so high a place, nor any disposition to take it without special permission.\* John North, the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, besides insisting that the ladies of the upper table were bound to carve, was also of opinion that they ought to carve expeditiously. In early manhood, long before he became a nervous

\* "His lordship's custom was after dinner to retire with his company, which were not a few, and of the best quality in town, into a withdrawing-room, and the tea-table followed, where his youngest brother officiated, and him his lordship set at the head of the table, for want of a lady to carve. His suppers were in another room, and where some of his best friends, and some (painted) enemies ordinarily assembled. And this he thought the best refreshment the whole day afforded him; and before twelve he retired, and after a touch of his music, went to bed, his musician not leaving him till he was composed."—*Vide* ROGER NORTH'S "LIFE OF LORD-KEEPER GUILDFORD."

valetudinarian and magnate of the university, John North used to make mirth at the dinners and suppers of the best houses of Charles the Second's town by noisily demanding that "the ladies at the upper end of the table" should handle their carving-knives briskly, or else with fit humility "come down to their proper places at the lower end."\* A free talker in "fit company," and a young divine, seeking preferment at the Merry Monarch's court by a loquacious sprightliness that would not now-a-days recommend a clergyman to the distributors of ecclesiastical patronage, Jack North prided himself on his smartness in bantering womankind. More than one great lady learnt from him "that of all the beasts of the field God Almighty thought woman the fittest companion for man."

\* "And I might," says Roger of the young Cantabrigian fellow, "mention some ladies with whom he pretended to be innocently merry and free; and indeed more so (often) than welcome, as when he touched the pre-eminencies of their sex. As for instance, saying that of all the beasts of the field, God Almighty thought woman the fittest companion for man. I have known him demand of the ladies at the upper end of the table, by right of their sitting there, that they would carve for him. 'Else,' said he, 'let them come down to the places at the lower end.' These passages and the like show somewhat of his humour, which made him very popular with the ladies and young company. For, notwithstanding all his seriousness and study, none ever was more agreeably talkative, in fit company, than he was."—*Vide* ROGER NORTH'S "LIFE OF DR. JOHN NORTH."



When they had been thus appointed to officiate as distributors of meat, even as their precursors of the Anglo-Saxon period had distributed bread, English gentlewomen of the seventeenth century were instructed by school-mistresses and professors of etiquette as to the ways in which it behoved them to carve joints. That she might be able to grasp a roast chicken without greasing her left hand, the gentle housewife was careful to trim its feet and the lower part of its legs with cut paper. To preserve the cleanness of her fingers, the same covering was put on those parts of joints which the carver usually touched with the left hand, whilst the right made play with the shining blade. The paper-frill which may still be seen round the bony point and small end of a leg of mutton, is a memorial of the fashion in which joints were *dressed* for the dainty hands of lady-carvers, in time prior to the introduction of the carving-fork, an implement that was not in universal use so late as the Commonwealth, when the author of "Lady Rich's Closet," (1653) admonished gentlewomen to adopt the convenient instrument, in defiance of a common prejudice. "In carving at your own table," says the author of that entertaining work to the 'ingenious gentlewoman of the period,' "distribute the best pieces first; and it will appear very comely and decent to use a fork; so touch no meat without it."

By the same competent teacher, the "ingenious gentlewoman" of a troublous time was instructed on other points of good manners. She was told to sit at table with a straight body, and, even though she were an aunt, to refrain from resting her elbows on the table-cloth. She might not "by ravenous gesture display a voracious appetite." If she talked whilst eating, or "smacked like a pig," or swallowed "spoon-meat so hot" as to bring tears into her eyes, she would be taken for an underbred person, even though she were an earl's daughter. Shunning the appearance of greediness, she should also avoid such squeamishness as was exhibited by the gentlewoman who ate her peas singly, or by the half-pea at a time, and was horrified at the suggestion that she should take them by the spoonful. She was warned still more emphatically not to drink herself out of breath, so that to recover herself she would have to "blow strongly." "Throwing down your liquor," says the "accomplished Lady Rich," with no excessive severity, "as into a funnel, is an action fitter for a juggler than a gentlewoman."\*

\* "A gentlewoman, being at table abroad or at home, must observe to keep her body straight, and lean not by any means with her elbow, nor by ravenous gesture discover a voracious appetite. Talk not when you have meat in your mouth, and do not smack like a pig, nor venture to eat spoon-meat so hot that the tears stand in your eyes; which is as unseemly as the gentlewoman who pretended

Whilst English society sat at meals, with the women at the upper and the men at the lower end of the table, the author of "A Brief Character of the Low Countries under the States" (1652), informed his readers that the Dutch, with better taste and more gallantry, intermingled the sexes, so that every lady had on either hand a gentleman to amuse her with gossip, and relieve her of the labour of carving. "They sit not," said the describer of high life in the Low Countries, "as we in England, men together and women first, but ever intermingled with a man between, and instead of marchpanes and such juncates, it's good manners, if any there be, to carry away a piece of apple-pie in your pocket." Originating in a time when fashion had discredited the ancient custom that permitted guests to pocket marchpanes and sweet-

to have as little a stomach as she had a mouth, and therefore would not swallow her peas by spoonsful, but took them one by one, and cut them into two before she could eat them. It is very uncomely to drink so large a draught that your breath is almost gone, and are forced to blow strongly to recover yourself; throwing down your liquor as into a funnel, is an action fitter for a juggler than a gentlewoman. Thus much for our observations in general. If I am defective in particulars, your own prudence, discretion, and curious observations will supply. In carving at your own table, distribute the best pieces first; and it will appear very comely and decent to use a fork; so touch no meat without it."—*Vide* "THE ACCOMPLISHED LADY RICH'S CLOSET OF RARITIES; or, Ingenious Gentlewoman's Delightful Companion." 1653.

meats, the saying "Eat what you like, but pocket none," is a comparatively modern maxim.

In olden time, carvers at table had to observe nice rules in discharging their functions. Besides distributing the best pieces first, they were required to distribute them amongst the guests of first quality, and with intelligent regard for the laws of heraldic precedence. The greatest man at the feast had an indefensible title to the liver wing of a chicken, and to the thigh of a woodcock; and his wife might feel affronted if she were helped *after* a lady of inferior quality. At a later date, fashion required the carver to consult the special taste of each guest before helping him to a cut of sirloin or a piece of game. Dr. Kitchiner, however, had the good sense to decry these nice formalities of a too ceremonious etiquette, and to insist that the carver should make expedition rather than politeness his first object. "To effect this," he urged, "fill the plates and send them round, instead of asking each individual if they choose soup, fish, &c., or what particular part they prefer, for, as they cannot be all choosers, you will thus escape making any invidious distinctions. A dexterous carver (especially if he be possessed with that determined enemy to ceremony and sauce, a keen appetite), will help half-a-dozen people in half the time one of your would-be-thought polite folks wastes in making

civil compliments." To save time, the doctor recommended that poultry, especially turkeys and geese, should be sent to table ready cut up. When the author of "The Cook's Oracle" gave this advice, he little imagined how near was the time when the carving-knives would be removed from the table, and the carver's work would be done by waiters at a sideboard.

Together with the carving-knife and carving-fork, other implements vanished from the table; the unsightly "rests" on which the carver reposed his weapons during the intermissions of his industry; and the long, pointed "steel" on which he sharpened his blade with clattering noise, like a butcher preparing to serve customers at his stall. These articles may, indeed, still be seen on the tables of old-fashioned folk; but they deserve mention in a work which will be popular reading long after they have become curious relics of past manners, and shall be found on collectors' shelves of social antiquities, by the side of snuff-bottles, decanter-slides, and tinder-boxes.

The Dutch fashion of placing men and women alternately at table having been adopted by our ancestors towards the close of the seventeenth century, it was not long ere the toils of carving passed from the gentler sex to more muscular hands. Retaining the honour of an office to which



she had imparted dignity, the lady of the house relinquished its labour to the men at her side; and together with the honour, she kept the seat which had been conceded to her as a handler of the great knife.

That her presence in that throne of honour contributes largely to the success of a dinner, Brillat-Savarin bore testimony with proper enthusiasm. The same critical epicure also maintained that whilst she gave splendour and animation to the repast, the luxuries of the table heightened her beauty and rendered her charms less perishable. “La gourmandise,” says the Frenchman, “est favorable à la beauté.” And he adds, “Une suite d’observations exactes et rigoureuses a démontré qu’un régime succulent, délicat, et soigné repousse longtemps et bien loin les apparences extérieures de la vieillesse . . . il est également vrai de dire que, toutes choses égales, ceux qui savent manger sont comparativement de dix ans plus jeunes que ceux à qui cette science est étrangère.”

Less gallant than the gastronomic lawyer, Grimod de la Reynière held that women were out of place in the company of feasting epicures, whose attention should not be diverted from beautiful things *on* to lovely creatures *at* the table. After coffee, the fair sex might resume their rights, which fell into abeyance during a grand meal. But fine gentleman

though he was, M. de la Reynière was a vulgarian at table, who did not blush to declare that ceremonious politeness should be banished from the festal board. "Toutes les cérémonies," he says, "lorsqu'on est à table vont toujours au détriment du dîner. Le grand point c'est de manger chaud, proprement, long-temps, et beaucoup."

Whilst Brillat-Savarin wished woman to participate in the finer pleasures of the table, in order that she should enhance and preserve her beauty, Louis Eustache Ude, whilom chef to Louis XVI. and the Earl of Sefton, urged that the young ladies of noble houses should be brought at early age to their parent's tables, for the education of their palates, and for the development of gastronomic taste. Even more than from the English fog, which depressed his spirits, and from the prejudices of the English physicians, who held his art in contempt bordering on abhorrence, Ude suffered from the coldness and indifference which the women of our aristocracy exhibited to his special pursuit. Alike in *gourmandise* and *friandise*,\* he found them deficient in sensibility

\* La gourmandise est une préférence passionnée, raisonnée, et habituelle pour les objets qui flattent le goût. La gourmandise est ennemie des excès; tout homme qui s'indigère ou s'enivre court risque d'être rayé des contrôles. La gourmandise comprend aussi la friandise, qui n'est autre que la même préférence appliquée aux mets légers, délicats, de peu de volume, aux confitures, aux pâtisseries, etc. C'est une modification introduite en faveur des femmes et des

and enthusiasm. "The ladies of England," he wrote towards the close of his beneficent career, "are unfavourably disposed to our art; yet I find no difficulty in assigning the cause of it. It is particularly the case with them (and indeed it is so in some measure with our own sex) that they are not introduced to their parents' table till their palates have been completely benumbed by the strict diet observed in the nursery and boarding-schools."

Since Louis Eustache Ude wrote thus feelingly on a subject for deep regret, the culinary education of our womankind, instead of improving, has greatly deteriorated. Whilst their organs of taste are still torpedied by a restricted diet, consisting chiefly of mutton and bread and butter, our gentle girls receive no systematic instruction in cookery and the mysteries of the kitchen, in the period of expanding intelligence that intervenes between scholastic discipline and marriage. Whatever fragmentary knowledge they possess of these high matters, has been picked up at rout-suppers and clandestine visits to the housekeeper's room. Their grandmothers seldom survived their teens without acquiring at least a superficial acquaintance with the theory and practice of the "generous art." But now-a-days not

hommes qui leur ressemblent."—*Vide* BRILLAT-SAVARIN'S "PHYSIOLOGIE DU GOUT."

one young gentlewoman in a hundred can make an omelette or cook a *sole au gratin*. Misfortune has attended several attempts to establish seminaries for the sufficient instruction of womankind in the affairs of the table. The change of fashion, which degraded carving from the rank of the elegant accomplishments, gave the *coup de grâce* to the Beak Street Academy, where, so late as thirty years since, a young lady on the eve of her marriage might acquire the art of cutting meat, in a course of twelve lessons, at a guinea a lesson, exclusive of the cost of the viands on which she operated. A similar fate befell the Berners Street School of Cookery, which gave its grandest dinner on the day that saw Alexandra of Denmark pass through London on her triumphal way to Windsor and wedlock. The South Kensington School of Cookery opened under fairer auspices, but hitherto Professor Buckmaster's zeal and ability have barely preserved it from the failure which usually follows ridicule.

## CHAPTER XI.

## FORKS AND NAPERY.

“Here I will mention a thing that might have been spoken of before in the discourse of the first Italian towne. I observed a custome in all those Italian cities and townes through which I passed, that is not used in any other country that I saw in my travels, neither do I thinke that any other nation of Christendome doth use it, but only Italy. The Italian, and also most strangers that are commorant in Italy, do alwaies at their meates use a little forke when they cut their meat. For while with their knife which they hold in one hand, they cut the meate out of the dish, they fasten their forke, which they hold in the other hand, upon the same dish; so that whatsoever he be that sitteth in the company of any others at meals, should unadvisedly touch the dishe of meate with his fingers from which all at the table doe cut, he will give occasion of offence unto the company, as having transgressed the lawes of good manners, insomuch that for his error he shalle be at least brow-beaten if not reprehended in wordes. This form of feeding, I understand, is generally used in all places of Italy; their forkes being for the most of yron or steele, and some silver, but those are used only by gentlemen. The reason of their curiosity is, because the Italian cannot by any means indure to have his dish touched with fingers, seeing that all men’s fingers are not alike cleane. Hereupon I myselfe thought good to imitate the Italian fashion by this forked cutting of meate, not only while I was in Italy, but also in Germany, and oftentimes in England since I came home, being once quipped for that frequent using of my forke by a certain learned gentleman, a familiar friend of mine, one Mr. Lawrence Whitaker, who in his merry humour doubted not to call me *Furcifer* only for using a fork at feeding, but for no other cause.”—*Vide* THOMAS CORYATE’S “CRUDITIES.”

“FINGERS were made before forks,” says the familiar adage that had its origin in the warm disdain with which our ancestors of the



seventeenth century repudiated the Italian table-fork as a fantastic and even impious contrivance. The ancient people of the world fingered their cooked meat, and it was only at a quite recent date that the modern peoples adopted the pronged tool by which we convey food to the mouth without soiling the hand.

Products of necessity, the first culinary forks were devised for the benefit of artistes bent on withdrawing sodden flesh from a boiling cauldron. The Greek *creagra*—a staff, fitted at the lower end with a hook, or with prongs that bore a distant resemblance to human fingers—was a rude pot-fork, which, though greatly serviceable to cooks, would have been of no convenience to a reclining gourmand. Possessing several varieties of this kitchen tool, the Romans, notwithstanding their care for the caprice as well as for the comfort of epicurean feasters, never produced a table fork, though it was more needed by the ancient, whose recumbent posture deprived him of the use of one arm, than by the mediævalist who, sitting at meat, could serve his mouth with both hands. Caylus and Grignon, indeed, maintain that table-forks were not absolutely unknown to the imperial gastronomers; but their opinion, which never had the testimony of sufficient facts, has been altogether discredited. Had the luxurious Romans been users of forks,

some specimens of the implement would certainly have been found in the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

But though they fed themselves with their fingers, it must not be imagined that the mediævalists were altogether fork-less. Forty years since, a fork of Anglo-Saxon manufacture was discovered in Wiltshire, under circumstances which leave no room for doubt that it was made at least as early as the later part of the ninth century. Another Anglo-Saxon fork, described in Akerman's *Pagan Saxondom*, is a bone-handled implement that some foppish Thane may have used to the mingled surprise and contempt of his simpler acquaintances. And from that period to the close of the Tudor time, there is evidence that our ancestors had a few forks, long before they were commonly placed on the English table, and regarded as necessary articles of furniture. Queen Elizabeth had at least three forks, one of "crystal, garnished with gold, and sparks of garnets; another of coral, slightly garnished with gold; and a third of gold garnished with two little rubies, two little pearls pendant, and a little coral." But it is obvious that these daintily set and jewelled tools were never meant for serious use. Presents from courtiers who sought her royal smile with gifts curious for their costly whimsicalness, her Highness re-

garded them as toys for the casket, or cabinet, rather than as tools for the table. She may have used one of them to pick a sweetmeat or a candied fruit from a dish of syrup; but it certainly never occurred to her to put them into gobbets of venison, or the breast of a Michaelmas goose. To the last, whether eating in public or private, the virgin-queen fingered her victuals, and would have imputed sheer madness to any courtier who had prophesied that, ere another century had passed, no queen of England would be able to do likewise without rousing the disgust of all beholders of her incivility. As for her fair cousin, Mary of Scotland—that paragon of feminine delicacy and winsomness to manufacturers of historical romance—it is probable that her little head fell from her neck, ere her eyes had seen even a toy-fork.

Whilst the spoon was the only implement used in feeding the mouth, entertainers were not required to provide the guest with one. Whether he came for a month or a day, to a series of banquets or a single repast every guest always brought his spoon in his pocket. Never travelling without the implement, which was as universal a piece of personal equipment as a watch is at the present time, the modish man of olden England no sooner found himself seated at a

strange board than, taking his spoon-case from its place of concealment, he exhibited the spoon, which had usually been given him by one of his baptismal sponsors. It was the same with women and children. When everyone used a spoon, and hosts seldom thought of providing spoons, the spoon was a piece of portable property that went wherever its owner went.\*

As to shape, the most common was the apostle spoon, *i.e.*, the spoon whose handle was fashioned in the likeness of one of the apostles. Spoons so made were usually given at christenings by spiritual parents to their spiritual children; richer sponsors giving an entire set of twelve spoons, whilst the less opulent or liberal god-parent gave a set of four, or a single spoon. The gift, besides being typical of the material abundance which the sponsor of course desired for the child of grace, and being fashioned so as to remind him in after years at every meal of his religious obligations, was also an eminently useful present in the days when

\* Only a few years since it was usual with the keepers of boarding-schools to require each of their pupils to bring a spoon, or a spoon and fork, for his or her special use. This practice, still maintained in a few old-fashioned schools, is the "survival" of the once universal fashion that required guests to bring their own table implements to their entertainer's board. As spoons became cheaper and more plentiful, the custom became less and less general; and at present its observance, even amongst school-children, is not common.

to go spoonless was nearly tantamount to going supperless, since the person without a spoon in his wallet was likely to fare badly even at a liberal table. Such good reasons cannot be urged in defence of the conventional christening present in these days, when spoons of secular pattern are still given at the font to children who are never expected to use them on arriving at years of discretion. Now-a-days, the customary offering of a spoon is the mere "survival" (as an excellent social writer would term it) of a usage that was convenient and practically beneficial when spoons were not abundant in every household. The same may be said of the silver "mug," a gift which, when handsome drinking vessels were not easily attainable, proved a most useful possession to the Christian, who, having acquired it in infancy from a godfather, used it daily through his adult life for caudle, wine, or ale.

Spoons were made of several materials. In the rich or fairly prosperous circles they were usually of silver, which was sometimes gilt. But for folk of the poorer sort, spoons were made of tinned iron, horn, wood, and other cheap stuff. "I'll give him a dozen latten spoons, and thou shalt translate them," Shakespeare *is said* to have remarked to Ben Jonson, when about to stand godfather to one of his fellow-poet's children, making a pun, whose



badness does not strengthen the credibility of an apocryphal story. Spoons of tinned iron were called latten spoons. The meanest of all spoons was the wooden spoon. And it is worthy of remark that this cheapest of table implements has, like the spoon of precious metal, given us a pungent and long-lived adage.

To say of a man, "He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth," was equivalent to calling him a prosperous fellow, whose good fortunes commenced at his very birth, when he had a sponsor rich enough to give him a silver spoon. And the meaning of the apt words was extended so as to cover all the favourites of fortune whose good estate, in no respect consequent on their own merits, came to them in the cradle from the benevolence of other persons. To remark of a man that "he had always fed himself with the wooden spoon," implied that he was a person of no account, who at any banquet would of course sit "below the salt" with inferior company, and fill himself with the poorer fare, as became a guest armed only with a spoon of wood. When it had passed from general folk-lore, this saying won a special significance at the universities. At Cambridge, to this day, the occupant of the lowest place in the mathematical tripos is termed "the wooden spoon," *i.e.*, is rated as a scholar who, when feasting at the table of knowledge, sat with the users of

wooden spoons, and was only allowed to help himself to the poorer fare of the *hoi polloi*, below the salt. *A propos* of this mention of the salt, it may be observed that the word, when applied to the choicest persons of company, had a twofold meaning. Besides implying that they gave flavour and piquancy to the social mess, it also intimated that they were the proper occupants of the higher places above the great salt-cellar.

Our ancestors were still feeding themselves without forks, on fare something more massive and heavy than the food of the mediæval cuisine, when, in the time of James the First, it entered the head of a Somersetshire squire to pack his traps, and start for a five months' tour in "France, Savoy, Italy, Rhetia, commonly called the Grisons country, Helvetia, *alias* Switzerland, some parts of Germany and the Netherlands." It was a time when English gentlemen seldom visited the Continent for pleasure. The Reformation had put an end to the pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem, which made travellers of so many of the English folk of our Catholic period. Many years had also passed since English men and women had fled from the Marian inquisitors to Switzerland and the Low Countries. It was not yet the mode with British parents to send their "youngsters of quality," under the guardianship of reverend bear-leaders

for "the grand tour;" and the newest kind of modern "tourism," with its railways and steamboats, was the unimagined fashion of a distant future.

When Tom Coryate declared his purpose to see the world on the other side of the English Channel, and even to work his way to Italy, there was a stir in "the hungry aire of Odcombe, in the county of Somerset." Tom's neighbours were alarmed for his health, his morals, his religion. If he were not caught by the Jesuits and won over to idolatry, he would return to Somersetshire with vicious manners and a broken constitution. But their expostulations were in vain. Like other wilful men, Mr. Coryate took his own way; and the consequences to society were noteworthy.

An epicure and lover of sights, Mr. Coryate partook freely of foreign dishes, whilst he gathered materials for his delightful narrative of travel. At Cremona he ate frogs with gust. He drank wine from the famous Heidelberg cask. At Venice he saw without disapprobation women on the stage of the principal theatre—"a thing," he remarks, "that I never saw before, though I have heard that it hath been sometimes used in London, and they performed it with as good a grace, action, and gesture, and whatever convenient for a player, as ever I saw any masculine actor." He saw other

ladies, whose vocation was even more questionable than that of the she-actors, and whose *chopines* (high-heeled shoes) appeared to him worthy of especial notice. But of all the Southern novelties, none delighted him more completely than the Italian fork, the Italian fan, and the Italian umbrella.

It was left for Jonas Hanway, in the middle of the following century, to emulate the courage of Thomas Coryate, and repeat his triumph over popular prejudice, in the eventually successful battle for the sunshade and the *parapluie*. But to Coryate belongs the honour of laying forks on the English table. It may not be imagined, however, that the innovation was accomplished without strenuous opposition. Apt at times to wax furious about trifles, English society was pricked by the pronged tool into a rage of contemptuous indignation which it is impossible to recall without a smile. Whilst the pulpit denounced, and the stage derided the new instrument, the sages of the fireside—forgetting that fingers were made before knives and spoons, as well as before forks—pushed the novelty aside with disdainful words, placed at the opening of this chapter. To the delight of his hearers, an angry preacher maintained that to touch meat with a fork was to declare impiously that God's comfortable "creatures" were not

worthy of being touched by human hands. Pandering to the popular excitement, Beaumont and Fletcher seasoned one of their plays with a fling at the "fork-carving traveller," whom Lawrence Whitaker had nicknamed "furcifer,"—"only for using a forke at feeding, but no other cause," says Coryate, who had enough Latin to know the precise meaning of the opprobrious designation. The fight between Furcifer and his foes was at its fiercest heat, when Fynes Morison in his "Itinerary," advising all young travellers to avoid a bootless conflict, urged them, on "returning home, to lay aside the fork of Italy," as well as "the affected gesture of France and all strange apparel."

But though it delayed, such vehement intolerance could not prevent the adoption of a simple contrivance, that in course of time commended itself to nice feeders of either sex, and to all orderly persons. It had no effect whatever on Coryate, whose good-humour equalled his daring. Decried and repudiated by the well-dressed mob, he had no sooner endured a repulse than he renewed the charge with smiling face and shining steel. Fixing his fork, and rushing for the thousandth time on his adversary, he eventually thrust it between the teeth of "society."

In his "Cosmography" (1652) Heylin alluded to "the use of silver forks which is by some of our



spruce gallants taken up of late;" and at the same time gentlewomen were admonished to use the fork in carving. By the close of Charles the Second's reign, forks, though still derided by hinds and artisans, were seen on all fairly furnished English tables.

In a museum of social curiosities a large cabinet might be filled with single specimens of the various forks, commonly used by our ancestors between the days of Anne and Victoria. There were forks with any number of prongs between two and six. Usually made of steel, they had handles of several materials, and half a hundred diversities of shape. Forks with green, yellow, and pink handles have disappeared, and the steel table-fork has become an almost obsolete thing in these days of sham silver. The few forks of Heylin's time were for the most part of silver. But the silver fork was somewhat rare till the opening of the present century. As the type of inferior gentility, it was used by the satirists of George the Fourth's time to designate the school of super-genteel writers who fifty years since described the beau-monde which they knew only by report. The "silver-fork school" was contemporaneous with, and closely related to, the "Rosa Matilda" school of novelist. So late as thirty years since, the introducers of the silver fork amongst our provincial commonalty encountered no little opposition.

"Waiter, take away that thing and bring me a fork," a fox-hunting squire once said in our hearing at a hunt-dinner. The thing he contemptuously rejected was a silver fork.

The fork did much for the simplification and advancement of the national cuisine by encouraging the taste for solid viands and natural flavours, that had been becoming more and more general since the days of Elizabeth, who, holding the ancient "gallimawfreys" in low esteem, liked a "cut of roast" above all things. The "delicate slice" was a thing unknown to the mediæval epicures, who fingered their "gobbets," or spooned their "dices" of meats, that to be justly appreciated should be eaten in dainty slivers, thin as silk and light as gossamer. The beef of Old England never had its proper honour until the fork enabled the carver to cut it properly.

The fork had also notable effects on the equipment and manners of the English table. The piquant author of "The Art of Dining," remarks of the Roman epicures, "It is quite frightful to think how they must have slobbered their long beards and togas, in conveying food from the table to the mouths without forks . . . and it is difficult to conceive how they could manage to drink at all, unless they sat up as the goblet was passed to them." Our mediæval ancestors had a great advan-

tage over the Romans in their adoption of a posture that left both hands free for action. But one part of Mr. Hayward's animadversion on the Apician gourmands is applicable to the English "quality" of all times, prior to the general use of the pronged tool. Dining in olden England must have been a distressingly sloppy process, when the rude feaster grabbed the choicest bits from dishes brimming with thick gravy, and the nicest feeder, after taking a gobbet of flesh, dipped it into the sauce-bowl before he carried the dripping morsel over the table-cloth to his lips. During the prevalence of such manners, the noble dame or damoiselle was commended for exemplary breeding, who dipped only the tips of her fingers in the sauce-dish, and contrived to eat her dinner without letting fragments of meat fall from her lips upon the table-cloth. Chaucer says of Madame Eglentine, the exemplary Prioress,

"At mete was she wele ytaughte withalle;  
She lette no morsel from her lippes falle,  
Ne wette hire fingeres with her sauce depe. "  
Wel coulde she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
That no drope ne fell upon hire brest.  
In curtesie was sette full moche hire lest,  
Hire over-lippe wiped she so clene,  
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene  
Of grese, when she dronken hadde hire draught.  
Ful semely after hire mete she raught."

So long as she did not plunge her hand deep in the gravy, the poet admitted her right to thrust her sop in the pan, even though she greased the tips of her fingers in doing so.

A better novelist than antiquary, Alexander Dumas committed a prodigious blunder in the "Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine," when he asserted that table-cloths and napkins were unknown in France much before the 13th century. "Le linge," wrote the daring and indiscreet Alexandre, "sur-tout le beau linge, ne fit que très tard son apparition en France. La propreté est le résultat, et non le présage, de la civilisation. Nos belles dames du XIII<sup>e</sup>. et du XIV<sup>e</sup>. siècle, aux pieds desquelles s'age-

\* Alexandre is less unfortunate in telling an old story to illustrate a use to which the napkin was often put by angry gentlemen at table-quarrels. "Alors s'établit," he says, "en France un usage singulier, celui de couper la nappe devant eux qu'on voulait défier ou à qui on voulait faire un reproche de bassesse ou de lâcheté. Charles VI., le jour de l'Epiphanie, avait à table plusieurs convives illustres, parmi lesquels se trouvait Guillaume de Hainault, comte d'Ostrevant. Tout-à-coup un héraut vint trancher la nappe devant le comte, en lui disant qu'un prince qui ne portait pas d'armes n'était pas digne de manger à la table du roi, Guillaume répondit que, comme les autres seigneurs, il portait l'écu, la lance, et l'épée. 'Non, sire,' répondit le héraut, 'cela est impossible; car votre oncle a été tué par les Frisons, et jusqu'à ce jour cependant sa mort est restée impunie; certes, si vous possédiez des armes, il y a longtemps qu'il serait vengé.'" To cast a gauntlet at a man was to declare him an enemy to be fought: to throw a napkin at him was to intimate that he was a dirty fellow who needed washing.

nouillèrent les Galaor, les Amadis, et les Lancelot du Lac, il faut bien avouer, non-seulement n'avaient pas de chemise la plupart du temps, mais ne les connaissaient point. Les nappes, déjà employées du temps d'Auguste, avaient disparu et n'étendirent sur nos tables leur blanche surface que vers le XIII<sup>e</sup>. siècle, et encore seulement chez les princes et chez les rois."

The Roman cuisine necessitated the continual use of napkins. The Augustan dandies were fanciful about their hand-towels, which were often stolen from their owners by such parasites as Hermogenes who, at a banquet without napkins, gratified his cleptomaniacal propensity by running off with the table-cloth.

"Attulerat mappam nemo, dum furta timentur,  
Mantile e mensâ surpuit Hermogenes.

Another stealer of napkins was the Asinius whom Catullus handed over to comical infamy. In "The Last Days of Pompeii," Lord Lytton called attention to the napkins of delicate linen with purple fringe, which Glaucus provided for his friends, and to the ediles special napkin, which he drew forth with the ostentation of a rich *parvenu*.

The peoples, who adopted the Apician code after the fall of Rome, were no less particular in respect to their table-linen. Plebeians were of course con-



tent to lick their fingers as well as their platters; but mediæval "society," alike in its earlier period and strictly feudal time, never grudged the cost of clean board-cloths and towels. The Anglo-Saxons spread their tables with pure napery; and from the Conquest to the era of the English Stuarts, our forefathers of the higher grades used table-linen lavishly, and made much parade of washing before and after meat. The sloppiness of their repasts forbade them to do otherwise. We have already seen how, in feudal England, the surnappe was put over the laid table, and how the lord laved his hands in assayed water, on the removal of the surcloth. At the conclusion of the meal, the spoons and dishes having been removed, the surnappe was drawn over the soiled table-cloth, when the satisfied feasters washed from their lips and hands the uncleanness which they had necessarily contracted during the banquet. It was the special office of the ewerer and his subordinates to provide lavers and linen for this purpose.

In these times of no forks and much washing at meat, the napkin, as a thing to be used rather than trifled with, was produced in a form convenient to the feaster actually needing it. The case was otherwise when the fork had made eating a pastime from which a fairly careful feeder could retire without wishing to cleanse his hands. No longer a necessity,

the napkin became a mere ornament and thing of ceremony; and in their desire to use it for decorative effect, the article which was no longer required for positive cleanliness, the Restoration chefs displayed curious ingenuity in folding it in new ways.

Charles the Second's favourite artiste, Giles Rose, the chef who succeeded to Robert May's honours and prophetic mantle, gave his "officers of the mouth" minute instructions for folding dinner napkins in twenty-six different fashions. On referring to the "Perfect School of Instructions for Officers of the Mouth, by Giles Rose, one of the Master-Cooks In His Majestie's Kitchen" (1682), the reader may learn how,

1. To frise a napkin.
2. To fold a napkin in bands.
3. To pleat a napkin in the form of a cockle-shell double.
4. To do the same single.
5. To pleat or fold a napkin in the form of a double melon.
6. To fold a napkin in the form of a melon single.
7. To fold a napkin in the fashion of a cock.
8. To pleat a napkin in the form of a hen.
9. To fold and pleat a napkin in the form of a hen and chickens.

10. To fold a napkin like two pullets.
  11. To fold a napkin in the form of a pigeon upon her nest in a basket.
  12. To pleat a napkin in the form of a partridge.
  13. To pleat a napkin in the form of a pheasant.
  14. To fold a napkin in the form of two capons in a pye.
  15. To fold a napkin like a hare.
  16. To fold a napkin like two rabbits.
  17. To fold a napkin like a sucking pig.
  18. To fold a napkin like a dog with a "choller" about his neck.
  19. To fold a napkin like a pike.
  20. To fold a napkin in the form of a carp.
  21. To fold a napkin like a turbot.
  22. To fold a napkin like a mitre.
  23. To fold a napkin like a turkey.
  24. To fold a napkin like a tortoise.
  25. To fold a napkin in the fashion of a cross, like the Order of the Holy Ghost.
  26. To make the cross of Lorraine.
- In Ben Jonson's "Devil's an Ass" (Act. V., scene 4), Meercraft speaks of

"The laudable use of forks,  
Brought into custom here as they are in Italy,  
To the sparing of napkins."

So early was it seen that the adoption of the fork would spare napkins, by greatly diminishing the

need for them. And forks had not been for many years in use ere they had the effect predicted by the dramatist. Napkins disappeared from the tables of economical housekeepers, who, before the introduction of the fork, would have deemed them indispensable for decency and cleanliness. And the few, still placed on more sumptuous tables, showed by their fantastic and complicating foldings that they were exhibited only for ornament. To "undo" a napkin folded like a turkey was to destroy a work of art; and in Charles the Second's time the young spark who was guilty of such a demolition of a beautiful object, would have offended his host, whilst infuriating his host's butler.

Napkins were retiring before the victorious forks, when, in an early year of Charles the Second's *actual* reign, Samuel Pepys went to the Guildhall banquet mentioned in the last chapter. His place was at the Merchant-strangers' table, and, on seeing it unprovided with napkins, he was disposed to impute the *strange* omission to his entertainer's niggardliness and incivility. "At noon," he wrote in his Journal, "I went to Guildhall, and, meeting with Mr. Proby, Sir R. Ford's son, and Lieutenant-Colonel Baron, a city commander, we went up and down to see the tables, where, under every salt, there was a bill of fare, and at the end of the table the persons proper for the table. Many were the

tables, but none in the Hall, but the Mayor's and the Lords of the Privy Council, that had napkins or knives, which was very strange." A few years later young Mr. Pepys would have seen nothing remarkable in this distinction between the chief and ordinary tables. And even in 1663 he would have been less surprised at it, had he known the town as well as he knew it after a longer study of its humours.

He had, of course, entered the Hall with his best spoon and spoon-case in his pocket. Already priding himself on his modishness, he was doubtless provided with a fork, an implement which every velvet-wearing gallant by that time carried to private banquet or public ordinary. For the absence of knife and napkin he could have accounted readily, had he been aware of the change of fashion with respect to those articles. While napkins were falling into comparative disuse, it was becoming more and more usual for the "diner-out" to carry on his person a case fitted with a knife as well as with a fork and spoon. Sir Antony Bateman, the Lord Mayor, was no mere citizen in high office. Belonging to a gentle family, that moved in the brightest circles of the town, he affected the newest fashions, and had probably ordered his butler to set the table in West-End style. The chief servant may be presumed to have withheld the napkins from the in-



ferior tables in obedience to some such order. He also forbore to lay knives, because he assumed, in his politeness, that the gentlemen of the city would bring their own case-knives, and would rather use them than such old-fashioned weapons as were stored in the buttery of the Guildhall. The liberality of the fare provided for the Merchant-strangers forbids us to attribute the absence of napkins to parsimony. Pepys admits that each mess at his table had "ten good dishes," with "plenty of wine of all sorts." Nor is the imputation of stinginess sustained adequately by the fact that the dishes were "wooden," and the drinking vessels of earthenware. Plate was scarce in England so soon after the Civil war, which had brought thousands upon thousands of silver spoons, tankards, and dishes to the melting-pot. And the civic store-rooms had no sufficient supply of glass for several hundreds of feasters, when the gentlemen of the Inns of Court were wont to eat off wooden trenchers and drink from pots of wood or earth. The cost of the banquet being some £800, a sum equal to £7000 of modern money, Pepys' insinuations of niggardliness were absurdly groundless.

The last diner-out to bring his own knife, fork, and spoon to an epicure's table was Mr. Pelham, the record of whose doings in the world of fashion was one of Lord Lytton's earliest literary achieve-

ments. Every reader of "Pelham" remembers how the hero of that capital novel exhibited his case and its tools to the delighted Lord Guloseton. "It contains," he said, eloquently, to the noble *bon-vivant*, "my spoon, my knife, my fork. Nature afflicted me with a propensity which, through these machines, I have endeavoured to remedy by art. I eat with too great a rapidity. It is a most unhappy failing; for one often hurries over in *one* minute what ought to have afforded the fullest delight for the period of *five*. It is, indeed, a vice which deadens enjoyment, as well as abbreviates it; it is a shameful waste of the gifts, and a melancholy perversion of the bounty of Providence. My conscience tormented me; but the habit, fatally indulged in early childhood, was not easy to overcome. At last I resolved to construct a spoon of peculiarly shallow dimensions, a fork so small that it would only raise a certain portion to my mouth, and a knife rendered blunt and jagged, so that it required a proper and just time to carve the goods 'the gods provide me.' My lord, 'the lovely Thais sits beside me' in the form of a bottle of Madeira. Suffer me to take wine with you."

Of course Lord Guloseton accepted the challenge graciously, and, forming a favourable opinion of so excellent a young gentleman, was ready to take his

advice on politics and other matters less important than eating and drinking.

Generally discarded from fashionable tables at the close of the eighteenth century, the napkin was seldom used or seen by the more modish epicures of Horace Walpole's era. "En Angleterre," says the author of "L'Art Culinaire," "tout le monde est rentré à trois heures, et l'on sert le dîner chez le négociant et le bourgeois; car chez les grands on ne dîne qu'à quatre heures. Une nappe qui descend jusqu'à terre couvre la table; il n'y a point de serviettes. Ce qui forme le couvert est ordinairement une fourchette à manche rond avec deux points d'acier, et un couteau dont la lame, large et arrondie, peut, dans le besoin, remplacer la cuillère; on en change à chaque service. Au dessert on enlève la nappe, et l'on sert à chacun un plus petit couvert, une jale de verre pour se laver les mains, et une serviette carrée, extrêmement petite. Après le dessert, qui n'est jamais long, vient *le boire*, que les Anglais préfèrent à tout, et les dames disparaissent." Whence it appears that in George the Third's time the dessert doily was regarded as the elegant and sufficient substitute for the old table-towel, and that the handler of a two-pronged steel fork might use his knife as a spoon. Four-pronged silver forks had come into general use before the

epicure was forbidden to put his knife into his mouth.

In these later years of universal luxury the full-sized white napkin is seen on every table, set for English folk who take their meals comfortably. Whether it should be rated more highly as an adornment, or a requisite for cleanliness, is a question that each reader may decide for himself. No critic of the festal board will underrate its decorative importance. On the other hand, everyone will admit that, though less needful than in ancient time, it is a convenient and useful article of table furniture. The author of "*Autres Contenances de Table*" admonishes the apprentice in good breeding not to twist his dinner napkin into a cord.

"De ta touaille ne fais corde  
Honnesteté ne s'y accorde."

Nervous and fidgetty gentlemen may still be found to whom this counsel should be repeated. These torturers of the napkin, when they have no occasion to use, should refrain from abusing it, so that it becomes as unsightly as a crumpled newspaper or a piece of hay-rope.

## CHAPTER XII.

## HORN, BELL, AND GONG.

“L’homme reçut de son estomac, en naissant, l’ordre de manger au moins trois fois par jour, pour réparer les forces que lui enlèvent le travail et, plus souvent encore, la paresse.”—*Vide* ALEXANDRE DUMAS’S “DICTIONNAIRE DE CUISINE.”

“Braikfastis for my lorde and my ladye. Furst a loof of brede in trenchers, two manchets, one quart of bere, a quart of wine, half a chyne of muton, ells a chyne of beif boyled.”—*Vide* “NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSEHOLD BOOK,” (1512.)

“When foure houres be past after breakfast, a man may safely take his dinner, and the most convenient time for dinner is about eleven of the clocke before noone. . . . About foure houres, or sixe after we have dined, the time convenient for supper.”—*Vide* THOMAS COGAN’S “HAVEN OF HEALTH.”

“Que le mouvement de consommation soit modéré, le dîner étant la dernière affaire de la journée; et que les convives se tiennent comme des voyageurs qui doivent arriver ensemble au même but.”—*Vide* BRILLAT-SAVARIN’S “PHYSIOLOGIE DU GOUT.”

RECOGNISING three kinds of appetite, and three kinds of *gourmandise*, Alexandre Dumas insists that man is instructed by nature to satisfy his craving for food at least three times a day.

The fiercest desire for food is the hunger of famine, which, to appease its pangs, devours raw flesh as greedily and thankfully as a roast pheasant or pullet. Such hunger is never experienced by the fortunate epicure, whose sharpest gust proceeds



from the gentle stimulus of the soup, oysters, or dainty *plat*, which rouses his gastronomic powers at the opening of a banquet. The finest of the three appetites is the transient revival of desire, which raises the scientific *gourmet* above the sensations of vulgar felicity when he regards an exquisite and specially-beloved delicacy at the close of a long repast. "Give me money to buy a loaf of bread, for I am very hungry," the street-beggar implored of the Prince Regent. "Lucky fellow," returned the Prince. "How many years have passed since I had the delight of a good appetite!" But the greatest gentleman and sensualist of modern England was a *bon-vivant* of the grosser sort. All great authorities on fine eating concur with the French novelist in the opinion that hunger paralyses the palate. The epicure should never bring an appetite to his table. Before satisfying it with food, he should create it by eating. The soup should call it into existence, the fish should quicken it, the *entrées* should raise it to the fulness of vigour, and, when it has been tranquilly allayed with substantial viands, the concluding *plat* should enable it to smile sportively as it dies away.

Just as there are three appetites, Dumas insists that there are three kinds of *gourmandise*. The first is the vehement sensuality, which becomes gluttony in its most repulsive manifestations, and

which theologians have placed amongst the seven deadly sins. It was the *gourmandise* of Vitellius. The second is the polite *gourmandise*, sung by Horace and glorified by Lucullus, which in these later times has been invested with mysteries, and raised to religious rank by the genius and labours of Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin. Including *friandise*, the love of tit-bits, this highest gastrolatry enlarges the affections, stimulates the intellect, and inspires our race with lofty ambitions. In every respect dissimilar to this beneficent passion for delicate eating, the third *gourmandise* is even more revolting than the first. It is the morbid, insatiable, and incessant craving for heavy food, which is fully described, with stories too marvellous for credence, in Mason Good's "Study of Medicine." It attacked Brutus after the death of Cæsar; and M. Dumas has no doubt that Esau suffered from it when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. "Ce fut sans doute," says Alexandre, "dans un accès de cette fatale maladie qu'Esau vendit à Jacob son droit d'aînesse pour un plat de lentilles."

In the number of their meals, and also in their hours for taking them, the practice of the old English differed much less from modern usage than is ordinarily supposed. The difference consists chiefly in the relinquishment of a term, the shifting

of another, and the substitution of a third. When regard is had to the times at which our ancestors rose from, and went to, bed, the difference becomes so slight that it may be said to disappear altogether.

Like Alexandre Dumas, our forefathers were generally of opinion that nature, by the promptings of the stomach, ordered man to take food three times a-day. They held that on rising from his couch he required a slight "snack," to break the fast which had lasted throughout the hours of sleep; that he needed a substantial banquet some four hours after his breakfast; and that it was good for him to have a second sound repast some five or six hours after the first grand meal. Rising at about six o'clock, they breakfasted after making the toilet, dined at ten or eleven o'clock, and supped at five in the afternoon. Acting on the same rule, now that we rise later from bed, we breakfast at nine, lunch some four hours later, and dine about six hours after luncheon. The hour of leaving bed postpones all the daily meals in the "society," which breakfasts at ten, lunches at two or three, and dines at eight or nine. In this matter the moderns have done little more than relinquish the word "supper," shift to the third meal the name which our forefathers applied to the second, and, in place of the term taken from it, give to the second repast the inexpressive name of

luncheon. In addition to their three daily repasts, the more luxurious and indulgent of the old English had intermediate "snacks" called "nuntions" (afterwards "luncheons"), and "rear-suppers"—the former coming between breakfast and dinner, and the latter following supper by three or four hours. Hence it appears that the modern dinner is the old English supper, and that the late repast, still served under the name of supper at routs shortly after midnight, is, in fact, the rear-supper of feudal society.

In the social history of every people, luxury is seen to ebb and flow, fall and rise, like a tidal river. Indulgence begets a disposition for temperance, or even asceticism; and then severe moderation is followed by a reaction towards excess. This must be borne in mind. Whilst the Old English were usually in favour of three meals a day, there were times when the more temperate restrained themselves to two meals or even to one meal; and also times when the indulgent permitted themselves to enjoy four, five, or even six daily repasts. The Danes, under Canute the Hardy, are reported to have been eaters of five or six meals a day. Alike remarkable for general luxuriousness and occasional abstinence, the Normans, alternately denouncing and commending rear-suppers, were by turns abstainers and gourmandizers.

It is remarkable that two of our best Elizabethan authorities on the table customs of their time deliver conflicting evidence concerning the meals of our ancestors towards the close of the sixteenth century. Whilst William Harrison bears witness that the English of his time were content with "dinner and supper onelie," Thomas Cogan, writing about the same time, speaks precisely of "breakefast, dinner, and supper" as the three regular daily meals of every well-kept Englishman. This discrepancy is doubtless due to the fact that though breakfast was the common indulgence of prosperous folk in Queen Elizabeth's days, it was not universally taken by all kinds of people. Hence, whilst Cogan, writing culinary notes for educated people, might fairly treat of breakfast as a meal of which all his readers partook, William Harrison, writing a survey of the general state of the people, might decline to notice as a regular repast what was only the superfluous daily regalement of the richer folk.

In the fifteenth century, breakfast was no set meal for inferior people. Edward the Fourth's exemplary mother was a breakfast-eater. "She taketh somethinge to recreate nature," says her biographer, "and so goeth to the chappell, hearing divine service and two lowe masses; from thence to dynner." But it was only to the chief officers of her household that she allowed the same indulgence.



“Breakfastes,” the chronicler continues, “be there none, savinge onely the head offycers when they be present; to the ladyes and gentlewomen; to the deans and to the chappell; to the almoner; to the gentlemen-ushers; to the cofferer; to the clerks of the kytchin, and to the marshal.”

Compassionating the state of our grandfathers, whose nightly indulgence in port and punch must have been followed by excruciating headaches in the morning, Mr. Thackeray asked pitifully and wonderingly what on earth they did for the mitigation of their torture, in the absence of soda water. Joe Sedley cooled his burning throat with mild beer; but the draught, which may have assuaged his heartburn, can scarcely have tranquillized his nerves, or been an anodyne to his throbbing head.

In these days of hot tea and deliciously aromatic coffee, the modern epicure is apt to wonder how our ancestors contrived to breakfast without either of the two fragrant and cheering drinks. His concern for their miserable condition will not be lessened by the assurance that, in the absence of tea and coffee, they drank beer and ale. Bread, salt fish, larded herrings, and sprats, washed down with beer and wine (on fish days), and bread, and mutton, or chine of boiled beef, diluted with the same drinks (on flesh days), were the regular breakfasts of the Earl and Countess of Northumberland, at the begin-

ning of Henry the Eighth's reign. The Earl's children breakfasted on like fare, only they had no wine in addition to their beer. As for the Countess's maids of honour, their caterer wrote thus :—" Breakfastys for my lady's gentylwomen. Item, a loif of houshold bred, a pottel of beire, and thre mutton bonys boyled, or ells a pece of bief boyled." How would any young gentlewoman of the present century like to exchange for such pot-house regalement her delicate breakfast picked from a table furnished with new laid eggs, lobster rissoles, cutlets in sharp sauce, game-pie, dainty rolls, a teapot full of choicest infusion, and a jug of scalding hot milk ready to be mixed with the black, fragrant decoction of coffee?

In the "Merry Wives of Windsor" (Act iii., s. 3), Page says :—"I do invite you to-morrow morning to my house to breakfast; after, we'll go a birding together: I have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?" The frequency of Shakespeare's allusions to breakfast demonstrates that the repast was common in Elizabethan England. But in the seventeenth century breakfasts were seldom so substantial as those of the "Northumberland Household Book." Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, Thomas Cogan urged "all those that have a care for health" to make light breakfasts. "For breakfast, I thinke," he says, in 'The Haven of Health,'

“those meates be most convenient, especially for students, which be of light digestion, as milke, butter, eggs, and such like.” At the same time, William Harrison maintained that the early snack was only the affair of the “young hongrie stomach that cannot fast till dinner-time.” That typical gentleman of Caroline England, the Duke of Newcastle, made his breakfast habitually on a manchet of fine bread and a glass of sack ; and to the close of the seventeenth century the ordinary breakfast of a not indulgent Englishman was a slice of bread and a glass of ale, beer, or dry wine. Husbandmen took the early snack as they walked round their fields, or to their first spell of labour. In the towns and villages it was general for men of all social grades, from the squire to the petty tradesman, to get it at the nearest ale-house. The “morning draught” at the inn was, in fact, the ordinary breakfast of the majority of Englishmen from the days of bluff Henry, to the time when the taste for tea put an end to the early meetings at the public house, and caused our great grandfathers to breakfast leisurely at their own tables rather than in a crowded bar-parlour. Unless they bear this fact in mind, readers of old biographies are apt to attribute tavern haunting propensities to sober and discreet gentlemen who, though they always opened the day with

drink and gossip at an ale-house, were no wastrels or ill-livers.

The old names for the two chief meals of the day deserve attention. Supper, the repast at which men took soup, commemorates the importance of the part played by pottages and porridges in the cuisine of the Old English. Several suggestions have been made for a derivation for "dinner." Dr. Doran, in his pleasant "Table Traits," insists that the word is an abbreviation of "dixième heure," ten o'clock, the usual hour for breakfast in Norman England. Whilst this explanation appears fanciful, and certainly imposes much work on the abbreviating process, it is (as the Doctor himself observes) irreconcilable with the fact that nine was a common dinner hour with England's French nobility. A better suggestion of the same kind is that the familiar word is a contraction of *déjeuner*, the word still applied in France, not to the "early snack" (the *café-au-lait* and roll), but to the earlier of two chief meals. At one time the classical pedants insisted that "dinner" came from the Greek "*deipnon*." But on reviewing all the derivations of the familiar term, provided by the ingenuity of etymologists and antiquaries, the readers of this page will be disposed to think the first *sound* meal of the day, eaten deliberately when workers in olden time *ceased* from their first spell of day's labour, gained

its original name from the old French *disner* to cease from work. On this point Richardson says, “*Dine*, Fr. Disner; It. Desinare. Perhaps, as suggested by Minshew, from the Lat. *Desinere*, i.e., cessare, a cessazione ab operâ, to cease, the time of ceasing from labour.” Etymologists have in like manner racked their brains to find the derivation of the more modern word *luncheon*, or, as the Elizabethan writers usually spelt it, nunchion. Whilst some regard the term as coming from longus (lonja), and having references to long slices of cake; others would have us think that it is akin to *nooning*, and points to the proper hour for the meal of those who *shun* the full heat and shining sun of *noon*. Perhaps “moon-shine” is the best comment on such talk about “noon-shun” and “noon-shine.”

The practice of Old England in respect to hours for mealing accorded with the practice of the other countries of feudal Europe. To avoid mistakes, the reader should bear in mind the old rule, which required dinner to be served for “quality” some four hours after the hour of leaving bed. The apparent disagreements of old chroniclers on an interesting subject disappear, when it is remembered that the time of quitting the couch varied with the seasons, and that the rule required the meal to be somewhat earlier in the summer than the winter. Rising later in the cold than in the warm months,



the Anglo-Norman gentry dined at nine in summer and ten in winter. It was the same in the Elizabethan period, people dining an hour earlier or later as the temperature induced them to rise early or lie late.

Alike in the Western and Eastern worlds, it was formerly a point of honour and modishness with great folk to dine before their social inferiors. When the Khan of Tartary had filled himself with mare's milk and horse-flesh, a herald used to proclaim daily that, "the omnipotent Khan having dined, all other potentates, princes, and great men of the earth might go to dinner." The great men having said grace after meat, the rabble might satisfy the cravings of hunger. On being asked what was the best hour for dining, Diogenes, never free from idlers bothering him with foolish questions, answered that a rich man should suit his pleasure, and a poor one seize his opportunity. In feudal England, whilst it pleased the nobility to dine as soon as they were hungry, gentle retainers found their earliest opportunity of dining when they had waited at table on their employers. Too modest to imitate lords and ladies, the merchants and traders of Elizabethan London took their meals at the feeding hours of courtly servitors. "With us," says William Harrison, "the nobilitie, gentry, and students doo ordinarilie go to dinner at eleven

before noone, and to supper at five, or between five and six at afternoone. The merchants dine and sup seldome before twelve at noone and six at night, especiallie in London. The husbandmen dine also at high noone, as they call it, and sup at seven or eight; but out of tearme in our universities the scholers dine at ten. As for the poorest sort, they generallie dine and sup when they may, so that to talke of their order of repast, it were but a needlesse matter." Cogan says, "But the usual time for dinner in the universities is eleven, or elsewhere about noone." The same author puts the time for supper at six hours after dinner, "which in the universities is about five of the clocke in the afternoone." And he adds, "But here ariseth a great question, whether a man should eat more at dinner than at supper. Learned doctors are divided on this subject." Cogan was of opinion that, though the strong might take heavy suppers with impunity and even with profit, the delicate should sup lightly. The Elizabethan proverb, "After dinner rest awhile, after supper walk a mile," shows that our ancestors did not go to bed immediately after the second satisfying meal.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the dinner hour was gradually made later and later, until the meal called dinner was eaten at the Elizabethan supper hour. In the same way supper was

postponed to the hour of the old rear-supper; and, dinner having been thus pushed off to the later part of the afternoon, the necessity arose for substantial luncheons. In the earlier half of George the Third's reign midday dinners were still permissible in good society, but three o'clock was a modish, and four the highly fashionable hour for dining. A French writer of the First Empire gives four o'clock as the fashionable hour for dinners in London. The great Napoleon's chancellor, and political dispenser of hospitality, had his dinners served at half-past five, and never failed to upbraid the guest who was five minutes after time. Five or half-past five was late enough to please Grimod de la Reynière, who concurred with Brillat-Savarin in holding that dinner should be so timed that the satisfied feaster, on leaving the table, should be ready for bed. By the close of the Farmer King's time, five was the usual dinner hour of great people in England. Dr. Kitchenier, the famous medical epicure and author of the "Cook's Oracle," who died in 1827, was to the last served with dinner at that hour; though before he retired for ever from his cosy house in Warren Street (43), Fitzroy Square, six was the dinner hour of Mayfair. In his "Apician Morsels" (1829), Dick Humelberguis Secundus names six o'clock as the time for dinner in good society, both in town and country.

But whatever the hour for dinner, all authorities agree that it should be observed scrupulously alike by host, cook, and guests. Brillat-Savarin declares of all qualities requisite in a cook exactitude is the most indispensable. The chef, exact in all his operations, should be especially so in respect to time. To ensure this accuracy, Kitchiner insisted that every dining-room should be furnished with a clock, that kept time with another good clock ticking over the fire-place of the kitchen. But with all his care for punctuality, the Doctor declared that dinner had better be a few minutes late than that a dish should be served underdone, or, even worse, overdone. "The first consideration," he observes, "must still be that the dinner 'be well done, when 'tis done.' It is a common fault with cooks, who are over anxious about time, to over-dress everything. The guests had better wait than the dinner. A little delay will improve their appetite; but if the dinner waits for the guests, it will deteriorate every minute." In fact, the punctuality of guests was chiefly desirable, in order that the dinner should not suffer from being "kept back," when ready to be served.

With the clear common sense, never wanting in intelligent voluptuaries, Brillat-Savarin maintained that for a host "to wait too long for a tardy guest was to be failing in proper respect for those who

are present." A fine epicure, as well as a great lawyer, Lord Lyndhurst was of the same opinion. He had no mercy for man or woman who had so little consideration for others as to trifle with a chef's reputation, and the natural cravings of a fasting company by want of punctuality. During his third tenure of the Seals, it was the affectation of "the town" to be late for dinner. In his determination that "the fashion" should not interfere with his comfort and the happiness of his more sensible friends, the Chancellor ordered his porter to bar the hall door when five minutes had passed over the appointed dinner hour, and not to open it again for any purpose whatever till dinner was at an end. The order was obeyed implicitly without respect to persons; and a few great people having been thereby rightly punished for their little foolishness, gentlemen, who could not be punctual at any other house in town, soon showed themselves precisely attentive to the most important requirement of the Lord Chancellor's invitations.

To ensure proper punctuality in the members of his household, and in guests tarrying under his roof, the prudent chief of an establishment never fails to give due warning of the approach and arrival of the dinner-hour. To effect this he has the choice of three instruments, the horn, the bell, and the gong. For the gong we are indebted to



the nabobs who a century or more since used to return from eastern lands with vast wealth, and tempers too irritable to endure any disrespect for their gastronomic needs. The old-fashioned nabob who swore incessantly, and talked mysterious gibberish with a swarthy valet, kept curricles by the score, and on dying of liver-disease sometimes left his money to the heroine of the last new novel, is no longer with us. He has been replaced by a much less gorgeous and choleric Anglo-Indian, who subsists on a moderate pension, and seldom leaves much wealth to his children. But his gong and chutnee are still with us, to stun our ears on the approach, and to warm our stomachs during the progress, of dinner. For a century before the introduction of the gong, the bell was the only instrument used for summoning the hungry to dinner. But in more distant time the ecclesiastical tintinnabulum was rarely used for so profane a purpose. Instead of heralding the advent of meals with "ringsion," as Jeremy Bentham used to term the music of a ringing bell, the feudal English, like their contemporaries of the Continent, gathered feasters to the smoking board with a concert of trumpets and drums, or with blasts from a single horn. The music of huntsmen running in upon their quarry, was the music which declared the venison and wild-boar ready

for the trenchers. Blown to announce the coming of dinner and supper, the horn was also wound to celebrate the virtue of particular dishes. The nobler creatures of the chase were seldom brought to table without notes from the trumpet. The same musical honours were also accorded to the grander birds and fishes—the peacock and swan, the sturgeon and turbot, when served in their entirety, being usually introduced with flourishes from the musicians in attendance. “Au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” says Alexandre Dumas, mentioning a usage of several earlier centuries, as well as the seventeenth age, “c’est-à-dire à l’époque où l’on dînait à midi, le cor, dans les grandes maisons, annonçait le moment du dîner. De là une locution perdue; on disait, ‘Cornez le dîner.’”

“Cornet the dinner,” was the feudal equivalent of the modern and more familiar phrase, “ring for dinner.” And in days when inferior people ate little meat in the winter months save salted beef, the more usual form of the order was “cornez le bœuf,” or “corn the beef.” Hence the viand, which during the long winters occasioned so much trouble to the sore gums of menials suffering from the scurvy, was called “corn-beef,” *i.e.*, the only beef that for months together was trumpeted to table. Richardson errs egregiously when he insists that *corned beef* derived its distinguishing

epithet from the grains or corns of salt with which it was pickled. Corned beef is trumpeted beef, or, as we should now-a-days say, dinner-bell beef. Though the university was rich in bells that might have called the hungry, the dinner-horn was blown daily in several of the halls and colleges of Laudian Oxford. To this day the lawyers of the Middle Temple are "horned in" to dinner. Apropos of these notes of horn-music, it may be remarked that before they adopted the louder and more effective bell, the directors of our earliest railways—following the practice of the coaches—summoned the passengers to their trains by the trumpet.

If it is bad for guests to be late, it is far worse for a host to delay his appearance beyond the appointed hour. In the latter case the culprit's remissness inflicts embarrassment, and possibly suffering, on an entire assembly of persons, for whose pleasure he is bound by honour to be solicitous, so long as they are under his roof. If the tardy guest deserves censure, what punishment is due to the offender who only begins his toilet as the last visitor enters the drawing-room?

In the "*Physiologie du Goût*" Brillat-Savarin gives a comically-agonizing picture of the tortures which he endured whilst waiting four hours for dinner in the salon of the Arch-Chancellor Cam-

bacérès. The first Napoleon was in the plenitude of his power when the Chancellor, whose "dinner" were a powerful element of the Imperial system, invited Monsieur Brillat-Savarin to assist at a ceremonious banquet. When the guests arrived, there was no host to bid them welcome. The clock pointed to half-past five, the time fixed for the dinner, and still the Chancellor was conspicuous by his absence. Demanding punctuality from others, and ever ready to censure vehemently any want of it in his friends, he was, of all great hosts, the last who should have offended so signally. On entering the room of reception shortly before the half hour, Brillat-Savarin found it a scene of agitation and dismay. Some of the guests conversed in whispers or lowly-muttered words. Some were regarding one another curiously and piteously from the corners of their eyes. The countenances of all were expressive of surprise, perplexity, and painful apprehension. "What has happened?" Brillat-Savarin murmured in the ear of an acquaintance. "Alas!" was the answer, "Monseigneur has been sent for to the Council of the State; he has just set out, and who knows when he will return?" The man of law and gastronomic wisdom endeavoured to treat the affair lightly; but the attempt at playfulness was a doleful failure. Dropping into despondency at the close of the first hour, when every

guest had made half a dozen conjectures as to the nature of the urgent business at the Tuileries, the learned epicure seated himself on the corner of a sofa, and meditated gloomily on sudden reversals of fortune. Before the second hour had passed the victims became morose and querulous. There are conditions under which even Frenchmen, of the best temper and breeding, cannot be cheerful and polite. Those who bore themselves least manfully were three or four seatless wretches. Wandering to and fro, they scowled at one another, and regarded the sitting martyrs with looks of implacable animosity. The tortures of the second hour were repeated and intensified in the third. The aspect of affairs did not brighten when, towards the middle of the fourth hour, a gentleman, returning from a visit of inquiry to the kitchen, remarked viciously, "Monseigneur went out without giving orders, and, however long his absence, dinner will not be served till his return." The announcement was followed by a groan of anguish from the entire company. "Amongst all the martyrs," says the narrator, "the most wretched was the good D'Aigrefeuille, who is known to all Paris ; his body was all torture ; the agony of Laocoon was in his face. Pale, distracted, seeing nothing, he sat crouched upon an easy-chair, crossed his little hands upon his large belly, and closed his eyes, not to sleep, but to wait the ap-



proach of death." But ere this extreme sufferer lost consciousness, he was revived by a sound of wheels, and an animating assurance that relief was at hand. In another minute Cambacérès appeared—but too late. His friends had lost appetite, nerve, and all disposition for epicurean enjoyment. The stronger of them were restored to their usual vigour by a night's repose, but the weaker and more sensitive were obliged to send for their physicians on the morrow.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## MANNERS: AND THE WANT OF THEM.

"And though that he was worthy he was wise,  
'And of his port as meke as is a mayde."

CHAUCER'S "CANTERBURY TALES,"

"Manners make the man, and want of them 'the fellow.'"—OLD PROVERB.

"I cannot much commend the extravagance of the feasting at these readings."—"LIFE OF LORD KEEPER GUILDFORD."

"As drunk as a lord."—CURRENT CALUMNY.

THE English of strictly feudal times were no long sitters over the dinner-table. Having eaten sufficiently, they drank a deep draught of ale, passed the loving-cup, said grace, and went their ways—knightly persons to their sports, lawyers to their courts, traders to their shops, and farmers to their fields. The best of the day was the interval between dinner and supper, and men of pleasure resembled men of business in declining to spend it in drink. Cogan was of opinion that an hour was long enough for anyone's, and far too long for a student's, dinner. The directions given by chamberlains and masters of ceremonies for "voiding the hall," as soon as feasters had washed their hands after the third course, show that it was not the

mode with the old English to sit long over their drink when they had taken enough food at the earlier of the two chief meals.

But in Elizabethan time the wealthy would, on highly festal occasions, remain at table for several hours, to the confusion of their speech, and to the scandal of sober witnesses of their excess. "For the nobilitie, gentlemen, and merchantmen, especially at great meetings," says Harrison, "doo sit commonlie till two or three of the clocke at after-noone, so that with manie it is an hard matter to rise from the table to go to evening prayer, and returne from thence to come time enough for supper." But such indulgence appeared to the Elizabethan chronicler a discreditable departure from the better manners of olden time.

Clerical dignitaries had an evil fame, at least on the lips of their enemies, for their inordinate devotion to the pleasures of the table. But if not the pure inventions of Protestant malice, the Elizabethan stories of gluttonous prelates and tippling deans, who signalized themselves by intemperance in days prior to the Reformation, were certainly not devoid of humorous exaggeration.

Cogan speaks of an Archbishop of York who sat three entire years at dinner. But on inquiry it appears the primate only enjoyed himself at an unusually solemn banquet, "which," says Thomas

Wilson in the "Arte of Rhetoric" (1553), "perhaps began at eleven, and continued well-nigh till fower in the afternoone." Thus, instead of feasting for three years, His Grace did not prolong his sitting beyond the fifth hour. Scarcely had he entered on the first course when there appeared at his gate the Italian ecclesiastic, whose pleasantries gave birth to the malicious story. On learning that the Archbishop was at dinner, the Italian whiled away an hour in looking at the Minster, and then made a second attempt to get admittance to the Primate, when he was again repelled by the porter with a declaration that His Grace, being at dinner, could not receive callers. With no better result, the foreign priest knocked at the archbishop's gate at two o'clock; and for a fourth time at three o'clock, when "the porter, in a heate, answered never a worde, and churlishlie did shutte the gates upon him." Whereupon the Italian, whose affairs were urgent, set out at once for London, and returned to Rome without seeing the spiritual chief of the northern province. Three years later, encountering in Rome an Englishman who declared himself right well-known to His Grace of York, the Italian, clothing his face with a merry smile, inquired, drolly, "I pray you, good sir, hath that archbishop dined yet?"

The time which this archbishop actually spent at

the banquet was not inordinate in Grimod de la Reynière's opinion. "Cinq heures à table," says the famous editor of the "Almanach des Gourmands," "sont une latitude raisonnable pour un dîner nombreux et une chère recherchée."

But though the piquant stories of clerical *gourmandise* were based on gross exaggerations, and garnished with pure lies, there is no lack of evidence that the typical dignitaries of Holy Church in Catholic England were not deficient in gastronomic zeal and taste. Cranmer's orders, for the restraint of excess at clerical tables indicate that the festal freedom of the hierarchy sometimes bordered on licentiousness. By those orders, primates were limited to six flesh dishes on flesh days, and to the same number of fish dishes on fish days. Bishops were allowed five dishes, deans and archdeacons four dishes, and beneficed clergy of the inferior grades two dishes. Custards, tarts, fritters, cheese, and apples did not "count" as dishes. They were mere "extras" and fanciful additaments, of which the clerical *gourmet* might eat as many and much as he pleased. In his "Sufferings of the Clergy," Dr. Walker tells how a pious parish-priest was ejected from his cure by the Commonwealth Puritans because he was accused of having "eaten custard scandalously." The Reformers of the sixteenth century knew of no such offence, and permitted



men of all degrees to consult their pleasure in the eating of tarts and sweet-meats. But whilst limiting the numbers of dishes to be placed on clerical tables, they were careful also to prescribe the quantity of good cheer for each dish. Cranmer (*vide* Leland's "Collectanea") ordered "that of the greater fyshes or fowls, there should be but one in a dyshe, as crane, swan, turkey, haddocke, pyke, tench; and of the less but two, viz., capons two, pheasants two, conies two" (rabbits ranking as poultry at table, as they still do), "and woodcockes two. Of less sortes, as of partriches, the archbishop three, the bishop, and other degrees under hym, two. Of blackbirdes, the archbishop six, the bishop four, the other degrees three. Of larkes and snypes, and of that sort, but twelve." The object of the restrictions was the good of the poor, for whom the clergy were enjoined to buy "playne meates" with money hitherto spent on superfluous luxuries.

There was more talk after supper than after dinner in feudal time. The *while* during which our pre-Reformation ancestors rested themselves after the earlier, and the mile that they walked after the later meal, were alike short. As twilight deepened in summer, or when the log-fires on winter evenings covered wall and tapestry with flickering flame-shine, our forefathers liked to chat on their homely

interests, or listen to the music of minstrels and ballad-singers. Supper was also a jollier meal than dinner.

But in the nobler circles it was not the mode to be noisily hilarious at either meal. Populace might be riotous at meat, but aristocracy, even over its cups, was sedate, decorous, even frigid, notwithstanding its courteousness. Conversation was no art in high esteem at mediæval tables of the first class. The fun was made by the professional fool during the processes of assay and the shiftings of courses. The actual eating was done in silence. Mirthful loquacity being the business of the jester with belled cap—the prattler, who because he could prattle lightly, was pitied and petted, and sometimes whipt for his impudence—gentlemen of quick wit were reluctant to show it lest they too should be mistaken for “fools,” or at least should lose something of their dignity.

Towards the close of the strictly feudal (say of the Tudor) period, English manners in the higher ranks lost much of their ancient formality; but the same stately decorousness distinguished persons of patrician breeding and carriage from the commonalty. “I might here,” says William Harrison of his contemporaries in England, “talke somewhat of the great silence that is used at the tables of the honourable and wiser sort generallie

over all the realme (albeit that too much deserveth no commendation, for it belongeth to guests to be neither muti nor loquaces), likewise the moderate eating and drinking that is dailie seene, and finallie of the regard that each one hath to keepe himselfe from note of surfetting and drunkennesse (for which cause salt meat, except beefe, bacon, and porke are not anie whit esteemed, and yet these three may be much powdered); but as in the rehearsall thereof I should commend the nobleman, merchant, and frugall artificer, so I could not cleare the meaner sort of husbandmen of verie much bobbling (except it be here or there some od yeoman), with whom he is thought to be meriest that talketh of most ribaldrie, or the wisest man that speakest fastest among them, and now and then surfetting and drunkennesse, which they rather fall into for want of heed-taking, than wilfullie following or delighting in those errours of set mind and purpose. It may be that diuers of them living at home with hard and pinching diet, small drinks, and some of them having scarce enough of that, are soonest overtaken when they come unto such bankets, howbeit they take it generallie as no small disgrace if they happen to be cup-shotten, so that it is a grefe unto them, though now *sans remédie* sith the thing is done and past."

At times of high revel, and at particular festivities, such as bridals, the feudal English of the higher classes, however, allowed themselves greater freedom. And in accordance with the temper of a period, whose general dissoluteness was due to other causes besides antagonism to and reaction against Puritanism, our gentry of the Caroline reigns exhibit in their festivities a proneness to riot and "ungodly glee," unknown in former times. In his notice of the extravagant feasting, with which Francis North (Lord Guildford) celebrated his Temple "readings," Roger North gives a notable instance of the riotous ill manners that often distinguished the festive meetings of modish gentlemen in Charles the Second's London. "The profusion of the best provisions and wine," he observes, "was to the worst of purposes, debauchery, disorder, tumult and waste. I will give but one instance: upon the grand day, as it was called, a banquet was provided to be set on the table, composed of pyramids, and smaller services in form. The first pyramid was at least four feet high, with stages one above another. The conveying this up to the table, through a crowd, *that were in full purpose to overturn it*, was no small work; but with the friendly assistance of the gentlemen, it was set on the table. But, after it was looked upon a little, all went hand over head,

among the rout in the hall, and, for the more part, was trod under foot. The entertainment the nobility had out of this was, after they had tossed away the dishes, a view of the crowd in confusion, wallowing one over another, and contending for a dirty share of it." When the "gentlemen" of the Temple behaved in this unseemly manner, the "Inns of Court" were still regarded as *the* university for our aristocratic youth, and the more modish gallants of the four inns prided themselves on being the flower of fashion.

Throughout the remaining years of the seventeenth, and the earlier half of the eighteenth century, English manners continued to deteriorate under the growing taste for heavy wines and ardent spirits. The aristocratic mohocks of Queen Anne's time, like the German baron who amused himself by dancing on his dinner table, were outrageously noisy and clumsily sportive over their cups. The table manners of our earlier Georgian times are proverbial for grossness, and the literature of the period fully justifies their evil reputation. It was not till Chesterfield had made war against the swaggerers, and produced the school of stately "exquisites" who were the forerunners of the Brumwellian "dandies," that good sense combined with good taste to put drunkenness and festal uproar once more out of fashion.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## SPITS AND JACKS.

“Pinguia in verubus torrebinus exta columnis.”

*Vide* VIRGIL’S “Georgic II. 396.”

“Roost beef and goos, with gurlek, vinegre or pepur in conclusionn.”—*Vide* RUSSELL’S “BOKE OF NURTURE.”

“He was not pale as a forpined gost,  
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.”

*Vide* CHAUCER’S MONK, —CANTERBURY TALES.

“His arguments in silly circles run,  
Still round and round, and end where they begun,  
So the poor turnspit, as the wheel runs round,  
The more he gains, the more he loses ground.

*Vide* PITT’S “ART OF PREACHING.”

*Lord Kenyon* (to the Clerk of the Rules.) “Sir, tell the House of Commons that I will not be yelped at by my own turnspit.” *Jekyll* (on *Lord Kenyon*’s “always bright spits.”) “Don’t talk about the spits, for nothing *turns* on them.”—*Vide* LORD CAMPBELL’S “LIFE OF LORD KENYON.”

IN the series of inventions the spit precedes the pot. Madame Dacier overstated the case when she remarked that Homer makes *no* mention of boiled meat. An instance against her assertion may be found in the Fifth Book of the “Iliad,” which Warner produces as the only notice of boiling in the Homeric poems. The heroes of mythical Greece fed on “roasts” and “broils,” in their general, if not universal, want of pots that would endure fire.

But as soon as such vessels were invented by the Egyptians, they quickly came into common use. Whilst the rich, with slaves to turn their spits, accepted the boiler as a contrivance for multiplying the luxuries of the table, the poor adopted it as an instrument for cooking with the least possible trouble and cost. Boiling saved the waste of the dripping, and the labour of a vigilant "turner" of the roasting meat. Having thrown pieces of meat into the pot, the cook could leave them with a quiet mind till the time came for dishing the savoury pottage. The pot needs no watching. Indeed, there is an old adage which forbids the cook to watch his boiler. "The watched pot never boils."

In the mediæval kitchen, economy and convenience preferred the pot to the spit. For one dish cooked with the latter, twenty messes came from the former. The recipes of the "Forme of Cury" demonstrate this fact. Populace fed habitually from the pot, and, save on highly festal occasions, never sniffed the smell of "crackling." Even to modern time "roasts" were regarded as delicacies for the rich rather than as food for the poorer sort of people. Noble and knight, squire and wealthy franklin, thought gratefully of the spit. The husbandman and hind extolled the "pot" as the chief friend of the hungry.

Broiling doubtless preceded roasting; and it is

probable that ere meat was exposed to fire on a spit, the primitive roasters hung their flesh before the flaming fuel by means of string and cross-bar. But the wooden spit played an important part in cookery at an early date, and had been used for centuries when metal spits were regarded as novelties. It has been suggested that the steel spit is a contrivance for which we are indebted to the military profession. In default of a hazel skewer and iron pot, the fasting soldier would be apt to use his sword or spear as a toasting-fork. It may be that the military aptitude for cooking under difficulties led to the discovery which in Time's slow course put out of general request such rude and simple broaches as Virgil mentions in the second Georgic :—

“ The altar let the guilty goat approach,  
And roast his fat limbs on the hazel broach.”

Centuries have passed since wooden broaches disappeared from the well-furnished kitchen. Referring to them as the exploded contrivances of a remote time, Rabelais says, “ Then immediately did Epistemon make, in the name of the nine Muses, nine antique wooden spits.” But to this day they are used on Twelfth Night, in those parts of France where the superstitious peasant delights to work a miracle on the eve of Epiphany by spitting a few larks with a slender and fresh-cut twig, and then placing the loaded broach before a brisk fire. In a

few minutes the heat acts upon the bark and sap-vessels of the twig, so that it turns round without any application of muscular force. Of course, the simple beholders of this marvel exclaim, "A miracle! a miracle!" and attribute to spiritual agency the phenomenon for which they have no scientific explanation.

A simple stake of hard wood, thick at one end and sharpened at the other, the primitive spit, when it had been forced through a mass of flesh, was laid on two wooden crutches that were fixed at a convenient distance from the fire. To facilitate the turner's labour, a mechanical genius in course of time fitted this rudest form of spit with a handle, which was attached to the thick end of the staff by nails or pegs. To broach is to prick, whether the thing operated upon be a horse's flank, a vessel of liquor, a doctrine, an article of clothing, or a piece of news. Knights in olden time broached their steeds with points which perforated the skin. To this day ladies broach their mantles and neckerchiefs with pins that are usually fitted with clasps. A spit with the thick end pierced by the pins of a handle, was called a broached or broach-spit, a term that distinguished it from the pointed rod without a handle. The compound word was lost when it had become the universal custom to make spits with handles; and from that time the large roasting

skewer was called "the broach" as often as "the spit."

The broach-turners of the Old English kitchen were amongst its lowest drudges; though their toil was fairly remunerated. It was only in great households that they were retained permanently. Inferior establishments found their broach-turners for the preparation of special banquets in their "odd men" and "servile loafers," who had no title to rank as "regular servants." The aged pensioner of squire or merchant gladly took his groat and victuals for turning the spit on festal days in his patron's kitchen. The wandering beggar was always on the look-out for the same employment in the dwellings he approached with shuffling gait and whining voice. Diccou, the vagabond of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," says:—

"Many a mile have I walked, divers and sundry waies,  
And many a good man's house have been at in my days,  
Many a gossip's cup in my time have I tasted,  
And many a *broche-spit* have I both turned and basted.  
Many a piece of bacon have I had out of their balkes,  
In running over the country, with long and wery walkes."

Fourpence was the sum paid from the chest of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Sandwich, A.D. 1569, to the varlet who turned the broach for a feast served in honour of the mayor of the borough. Of course, the fellow had his food as well as his fee.



Not more fond of dogs than clever in training them to service, our Tudor ancestors substituted canine for human turnspits. To effect this they produced the obsolete "roaster," whose spit was set in motion by a wheel worked by a long-backed cur with short crooked legs. Set in a frame, nailed to a convenient beam of the kitchen ceiling, or fixed against an adjacent wall, the dog-wheel was connected by an "endless rope" with the spit that, instead of being fitted with a handle, had a circular piece of wood at one end. When the dog had been placed in the larger wheel of this ingenious apparatus, the spit was soon in action. Lifting his feet in futile attempts to run forwards, and escape from a hot coal laid at his heels on the inner surface of the wheel's circumference, the young animal gave the requisite impulse to the machine. If he grew sluggish as the ember cooled, another piece of burning fuel was taken from the fire, and placed where it would rouse his enthusiasm for monotonous toil. A day at the wheel was enough to teach a fairly intelligent cur that, once on duty, he could only save his heels from the fiery torture by using them actively in the cook's service, and that he could not escape from his rotatory workshop until he had accomplished the task imposed on his reluctant energies. On the second day, if he shrunk from the hand which proposed to put him to another spell of

work, the whip taught him the necessity of obedience to law. If he ventured to avoid his social obligations on the third day by hiding, as the roasting hour drew nigh, he was flogged with still greater severity. After a week of this sharp discipline he seldom failed to recognize his place in life. Yielding to the tyranny which he could not resist with advantage, he usually accommodated himself to circumstances with canine common sense, and if a dog of an unusually obsequious temper, he would even feign contentment with a lot and labour which his soul necessarily abhorred.

“How well do I recollect,” wrote Mr. Jesse, “in the days of my youth watching the operations of a turnspit dog at a house of a worthy Welsh clergyman who taught me to read. He was a good man, wore a bushy wig, black worsted stockings, and large plated buckles in his shoes. As he had several boarders as well as day scholars, his two turnspits had plenty to do. They were long-bodied, crook-legged, ugly dogs, with a suspicious unhappy look about them, as if they were weary of the task they had to do, and expected every moment to be seized upon to perform it. Cooks in those days, as they are said to be at present, were very cross; and if the poor animals, wearied with having a larger joint than usual to turn, stopped for a moment, the voice of the cook might be heard rating

them in no gentle manner. When we consider that a large solid piece of beef would take at least three hours before it was properly roasted, we may form some idea of the task a dog had to perform in turning a wheel during that time. A pointer has pleasure in finding game, the terrier worries rats with eagerness and delight, and the bull-dog even attacks bulls with the greatest energy, while the poor turnspit performs his task with compulsion, like a culprit on a tread-wheel, subject to scolding or beating if he stops a moment to rest his weary limbs, and is then kicked about the kitchen when the task is over."

Whilst dogs of suitable smallness worked in the broach-wheels of the Elizabethan kitchens, dogs of greater size and strength—mastiffs, so-called, says Harrison, from their ability to "master thieves"—were made to turn wheels that raised water from wells. At Royston, in Queen Elizabeth's time, water was thus lifted from the spring of a deep well by a dog that worked on a revolving floor, just as a squirrel plays on the wires of a rotatory cage. The ass, whose greater weight made it in the well-wheel a more efficient worker than the heaviest dog, was substituted for this service in the seventeenth century; and to this day a donkey raises water at Carisbrooke Castle, in the Isle of Wight, by vainly

trying to ascend the inner surface of a huge wooden wheel.

Speaking of the four-legged turners of the broach, an Elizabethan physician, Dr. Caius, the founder of Caius College, Cambridge, wrote: "There is comprehended, under the curs of the coarsest kind, a certain dog in kitchen service excellent. For when any meat is to be roasted, they go into a wheel, which they, turning about with the weight of their bodies, so diligently look to their business that no drudge nor scullion can do the feat more cunningly, whom the popular sort hereupon term turn-spits."

The veriest wretch of all domesticated animals, the canine turnspit had an appearance that accorded with his miserable estate. Deriving from the skill of dog-breeders an unseemly shape, that, whilst fitting him for his peculiar drudgery, made him a by-word amongst "fanciers" for unsurpassable ugliness, he could not regard the reflection of his distorted limbs and graceless body, in shining pewter or brilliant steel, without emotions of self-aborrence. The cripple and helot of his species, he was scorned by dogs of better looks and higher qualities. The mastiff regarded him as an indolent Carolinian proprietor regards a negro of the lowest type. Whilst my lady's spaniel and her toy-terrier shrunk from him as a terrifying monster, the blood-hound and the deer-hound growled significantly if

he ventured to approach them. No hand ever caressed him. The groom kicked, the scullion rated, the cook flogged him. But he had not the courage to wreak upon his human persecutors the fury of a temper whose natural malignity they aggravated by incessant cruelties. It might be imagined that, in a kitchen provided with two turnspits, he would at least find one congenial and sympathizing friend in the equally despised comrade of his toil and sorrow. But it was not so. Of all living creatures, your true turnspit dog detested none more ferociously and implacably than his fellow turnspit. Abused by men of all degrees, and scorned by every other "dog of the house," a pair of turnspits were continually snarling at and fighting each other. Each accused the other of shirking his fair share of their common work, and devouring more than his fair share of their common rations; and in their mutual rage they would sometimes fight to the death. Buffon tells the story of a turnspit dog that, on escaping from the wheel in the Duc de Lianfort's kitchen in Paris, ran in upon his fellow turnspit and killed him, because the latter had, by skulking, compelled him to perform an additional spell of work. A similar incident occurred at the Jesuit's College of La Flèche, where a turnspit dog, infuriated by being compelled to work in the wheel when it was his turn to be



resting, had no sooner escaped from the cage of torture than he hunted out his dishonest comrade, and, after a brief conflict with him, took his life.

The satirical literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contains several allusions to the turnspits' labour, which, in spite of its importance and beneficence, is invariably treated by the satirists with ingratitude and flippant disdain. The dog, however, is not the only creature that has been compelled to turn a spit. Lemery, the famous French chemist, who flourished in the time of Louis the Fourteenth, once saw a goose turning the broach on which a fat turkey was being roasted. "Alas!" says a gastronomer who moralizes on this incident with appropriate feeling, "we are all turnspits in this world; and when we roast a friend let us be aware that many stand ready to return the compliment." Describing the way in which this turnspit goose performed his task, Dumas says, "*Elle tenait l'extrémité de la broche par le bec, et son cou, en s'allongeant et en se rétrécissant, faisait l'effet d'un bras. De temps en temps seulement on avait soin de lui donner à boire.*" The story is produced by the novelist to prove that geese are susceptible of education.

Comical stories could be told of misadventures following from the untimely disappearance of turnspit curs. Many an epicure's kitchen has been

thrown into confusion by the sudden retirement of the broach-dog. Still worse; all the inhabitants of populous cities have been deprived of their "roasts," and reduced to pot-luck by the unexpected loss of many hundred curs, simultaneously and maliciously lured away from their proper kitchens. At the close of the last century the captain of a man-of-war stationed off Bristol, in his resentment at the city's incivility, sent his blue-jackets on shore with orders to seize and carry on board every turnspit dog to be found in the western metropolis. The sailors executed their instructions so completely, that the Bristolians were without roast meat until they came to terms with the heroic dog-stealer, and had solemnly promised to entertain him with a banquet appropriate to a sailor of his rank and special achievements. A similar trouble befell the fashionable folk of Bath some years later, when the chairmen of the streets, obeying certain practical jokers in the ranks of the highest quality, seized all the turnspits of the town on Saturday night, and kept them in concealment till Monday morning. Bath was without "hot roast" all Sunday, the day on which the smell and flavour of "hot roast" are especially agreeable to church-going Englishmen. By-the-way, the turnspit curs of Bath were notable for piety. When their professional avocations permitted them to do so, they never failed to accom-

pany their mistresses to the services of the abbey. And it is on record that they were examples of grave demeanour at the religious celebrations, unless the First Chapter of Ezekiel, with its reiterations of wheels within wheels, was one of the appointed lessons for the day. Verse 15 of that agonising chapter made the dogs restless; verse 16 caused them to yelp and bark angrily; the reader's voice was lost in the lamentable howlings and whinings that expressed the canine disapproval of verses 19 and 20. In their terror and anguish, the cruelly-entreated animals, raising as they ran a dismal concert of doleful sounds, rushed in a body from the abbey as the reader continued, "When those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."

In Charles the Second's time, a curious mechanician contrived a machine for roasting meat that was set in action by clock-work. Speaking of this invention in the "Life of Lord Keeper Guildford," Roger North says, "And once, upon an invitation, his lordship dined with Sir Samuel Moreland at his house; and, though his entertainment was exquisite, the greatest pleasure was to observe his devices; for everything showed art and mechanism. . . . His coach was most particular; and he made a portable engine that moved by watch-work, which

might be called a kitchen ; for it had a fireplace and grate, with which he could make a soup, broil costelette, or roast an egg ; and for that, his contrivance was by a fork with five tines (as I may call it), which stood upright at a due distance before the firegrate, and turned slowly. An egg, put into that, would roast according to art, and, if a piece of meat were stuck upon it, it was dressed by clock-work. He said that this machine cost him £30. He took it with him in his coach, and, at the inns, he was his own cook."

Cleverer in contriving new instruments than in ruling womanhood, the inventor of this cooking apparatus was the same Sir Samuel Moreland whose wife amused London with her misdemeanours, whilst he entertained it with ingenious proposals. Pepys's diary and correspondence contain several allusions to peccadilloes of the lady, who was eventually separated from her husband by judicial decree. Moreland corresponded with the Secretary for the Admiralty on his project for a new gun-carriage. An experimental agriculturist, Sir Samuel, lost his money in farming ; and he is one of the several mechanics of the seventeenth century who, on insufficient evidence, have been credited with the invention of the steam-engine.

Another notable invention for roasting meat was the musical turnspit, that, whilst causing joints to

gyrate before the Count de Castel Maria's kitchen-fire, played four-and-twenty tunes to the cooks of that opulent lord of Treviso. The spits of this machine turned a hundred and thirty roasts at the same time ; and the chef was informed, by the progress of the melodies, when the moment had arrived for removing each piece of meat. Chickens were done to a turn when the organ had played its twelfth tune ; the completion of the eighteenth air was the signal for withdrawing hares and pheasants ; but the largest pieces of beef and venison were not ready for the board until the twenty-fourth melody had been played out. Of course this delightful machine for charming the ear and gratifying the stomach could be set in motion by the dog, the human turnspit, or the revolving fans of the smoke-jack. A barrel-organ provided with roasting-spits is a mechanical combination that would delight our cook-maids, who are the steadiest and most munificent supporters of the vagrant organ-grinders of our London streets.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century the wheel and dog were replaced in many kitchens by the smoke-jack, an arrangement of rotating fans that, sent round by the draught of air and smoke ascending the chimney, accomplished the work hitherto performed by a miserable cur. At the opening of the present century, the village black-



smith made considerable yearly earnings as a maker and repairer of smoke-jacks ; and whilst attending to this department of his business, the intelligent artisan could not fail to observe that a chimney's draught was quickened by the rising smoke, and that it also increased in proportion to the largeness and fierceness of the fire. These obvious facts bear in an interesting way on the application of the "blast" to the locomotive. Makers and repairers of smoke-jacks, like all the other handy smiths of their district, the Northumbrian engine-wrights, who built our earliest working locomotives, were sagacious observers of all circumstances affecting the draught of house-chimneys. It devolved on them to cure chimneys of smoking, and to increase the burning power of stoves by quickening the chimney draught. Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that at an early date in the history of the locomotive they saw that its waste steam might be used to quicken the draught of its chimney, and that the value of this instrument for keeping up a good fire would increase in proportion to their ability to make a larger amount of steam.

The dog-wheel having been superseded by the smoke-jack, the latter was in its turn discredited by the jack, called a bottle-jack, from its resemblance to a large bottle. The motive power of

this instrument is the weight of the suspended meat, which it causes to revolve before the fire. Thus the work of turning the spit, in the course of centuries, passed from men to dogs, from dogs to atmospheric force, from sportive air to dead weight. Having first imposed the labour on his meanest curs, man next constrained the buoyant breeze to play the part of kitchen drudge. His next innovation was to substitute the hook-spit for the spear-spit, and by an ingenious piece of clock-work extort from "gravity" the service formerly rendered by the wanton atmosphere or by muscular force. He must be an old man who can remember seeing a turnspit-dog working in its wheel. But the smoke-jack is not yet altogether a thing of the past. Gloucestershire contains at least one great county-house, the bright spits of whose conservative kitchen are to this day turned by the fans of an old fashioned smoke-jack revolving in a huge old-fashioned chimney.

Apropos of "jacks," be it observed that the human drudge, who in feudal times turned a lord's meat-broach, was always called "Jack" by his contemptuous fellow-servants, who, by thus giving him a name universally despised by the people of Chaucer's England, expressed their disdain of his lowly office. Together with his labour, his name passed to the despised cur, the active air,

and the modern bottle. A jack-towel is another piece of kitchen furniture to be noticed in connection with the ancient turn-spit's special name. Antiquaries have erred in supposing that the endless towel, running on a roller, was called a jack or "jerk" towel because the user in selecting a dry place of the cloth "jerks" it round. The long, endless napkin running on a roller was called a jack-towel from its resemblance to the endless band or cord that connected the dog-wheel and spit.

Suspended from the crooked spit of a bottle-jack, and changing colour before a clear fire, a sirloin of beef may be fairly called its own turnspit. Human ingenuity achieved one of its proudest triumphs when it thus compelled a mass of unconscious flesh to prepare itself for the table. The epicures of old time never imagined that dead flesh would be thus made its own cook. All they could accomplish in this department of the marvellous was to signalize their barbarity by roasting live geese in a way that dispensed with the services of the turnspit.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CRUELITIES AND CURIOSITIES.

"A little before our times, a goose was wont to be brought to the table of the King of Arragon, that was roasted alive, as I have heard by old men of credit."—*Vide* BAPTISTA PORTA'S "NATURAL MAGICK."

"At last I discovered, with some joy, a pig at the lower end of the table, and begged a gentleman that was near to cut me a piece of it. Upon which the gentleman of the house said with real civility, 'I am sure you will like the pig, for it was whipt to death.'" —*Vide* ADDISON'S No. 148, "THE TATLER."

"So ox-flesh may grow tender, especially of old oxen, for they are hard and dry, and will not easily boil."—*Vide* "NATURAL MAGICK."

THE Neapolitans of the sixteenth century were instructed by John Baptista Porta how pleasant and droll a thing it was to pluck a living goose, anoint her with suet, put her on the floor of a closet walled in with a circular fireplace, roast her almost to death, and finally eat her palpitating flesh. Having received minute instructions for compassing this diabolical repast from the learned author of "Natural Magick," the finest gentlemen and daintiest ladies of Naples carried them out with conscientious exactitude in their kitchens and at their super-fashionable tables.

Speaking on the authority of "old men of credit,"

Baptista Porta relates that the "King of Arragon" delighted in no dish so much as in a goose that had cooked itself before expiring on his plate and under his royal observation. There was no "morbid tenderness" for the lower animals in Baptista's time. On the contrary, it was urged by the moralists of the period that for man to compassionate the sufferings of the unreasoning brutes was to question the benevolence of the Providence who had made pain a condition of their existence. As for Baptista's feelings, it is enough to say that, on eating his first fowl cooked in this Arragonese manner, he was sincerely sorry that it had not been roasted a little more. It was alive and excellent on the outside; but, alas! the process had suffered from the cook's precipitancy.

Recovering himself, the learned gentleman, whose poor Latin was superior to his humanity, observes:—"The rule to do it is thus: Take a duck, or a goose, or some such lusty creature, but the goose is best for the purpose; pull all the feathers from his body, leaving his head and his neck; then make a fire round about him, not too narrow, lest the smoke choke, or the fire roast him too soon not too wide, lest he escape unroasted. Within side set everywhere little pots of water, and put salt and honey to them. Let the goose be smeered all over with suet, and well larded, that he may be the better



meat, and rost the better; put fire about, but make not too much haste; when he begins to rost he will walk about, and cannot get forth, for the fire stops him; when he is weary, he quencheth his thirst by drinking the water, by cooling his heart and the rest of his internal parts. . . . Continually moisten his head and heart with a sponge. But when you see him run mad up and down, and to stumble, his heart then wants moysture, wherefore take him away, and set him on the table to your guests." "Ubi vero," says the noble philosopher, whose Latin is inadequately rendered by his English translator, "insania ferri, et cespitare conspexeris (deficit cordi humidum) remove, convivis appone evulsis semper partibus vociferantem, ut fere prius commessatus quam mortuus videatur."

This revolting receipt for cooking a goose may also be found in John Wecker's "Eighteen Books of the Secrets of Art and Nature," the impudent and clumsy reproduction of Porta's "Natural Magick," which Dr. Read put into English and published in the year of Charles the Second's restoration. From Read's translation of Wecker's piratical performance, it passed to Dr. Kitchiner's "Cook's Oracle," and other works on the curiosities of gastronomy.

If there ever was a time when our ancestors could have relished such a diabolical preparation, it had

passed long before the English physician produced his rendering of Wecker's "Art and Nature." There is no evidence that the King of Arragon's favourite dish was ever set on an English table. Not that our ancestors, in their pursuit of gastro-nomic pleasure, were incapable of practices repugnant to the finer feeling of the present generation. It was their custom to kill animals by slow and terrifying processes, in order that their flesh should be made tender by muscular agony and mental distress. The flesh of the hunted hare is said to be more tender than the flesh of a shot hare; and it is probable that the struggles of a creature slowly killed by torture soften its muscles. Anyhow, our forefathers were assured that flesh was tender in proportion to the amount of pain and terror employed in slaying it. Game struck by the terrifying falcon was more toothsome than game killed in a quicker and less alarming manner. Hence it was usual with the Old English to fly a hawk at barn-door poultry and "crammed birds." At other times, the feudal housekeeper would throw turkeys and peacocks into the air from the top of a gate-tower or church-steeple, in order that the fowls, as they dropped to the ground below, "with great pains and shaking of their wings," might endure terror which could not fail to intenerate their flesh. Or, with the same object in view, he would hang

live geese or turkeys by their bills or necks to the bow of a saddle, and order a servant to mount horse, and take them for a gallop across country. "And these," says the narrator, "being thus racked and tossed with great pains, at the journey's end you shall find dead and very tender."

In like manner bulls were baited with dogs, not so much for the barbarous pleasure of witnessing brutal conflicts as for the inteneration of the beef, which would have been less eatable had the animals been killed quickly with knife and bludgeon. "The butchers," says Baptista Porta, "put hounds at them, and let them prey upon them, and they will for some hours defend themselves with their horns; at last, being overcome by multitudes of dogs, they fall with their ears torn, and bit in their skin; these, brought into the shambles, and cut out, are more tender than ordinary." To bait an ox with dogs was to soften its flesh for the teeth of old men and children; but to bait the animal with bears was to make the meat so tender and soluble that it would melt in a babe's mouth. The apologist for the brutalizing amusements of our ancestors will see his advantage in this account of the origin and prime purpose of bull-baiting. To show that the barbarity had a commendable object is at least to palliate its worst features, and also to account for the social toleration of its exhibitions. So long as

schoolboys were allowed to subscribe their pence to defray the cost of bull-baitings, teachers of the young in their recognition of the *usefulness* overlooked the *cruelty* of the sport. To the gentlemen of George the Second's London, who daily watched from their drawing-room windows the bull-baitings of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the pastime was little else than a process for supplying the market with meat of the finest quality. Had they known that the proper inteneration of meat could have been compassed by means less inconvenient and harassing to the baited animal, these fair watchers of the bull-ring would have raised their voices for the suppression of a sport that was decidedly diverting and pleasant—to the spectators. But since Providence and human wisdom had ordained that beef should be thus prepared for the table, who were they that they should presume to question the merits of the arrangement? What was the transient discomfort of a brute in comparison with the pleasure of civilized men, and all the good that ensues from delicate feeding? It was not to be supposed that, having authorized man to kill and devour the inferior creatures, the great Giver of "good cheer" forbade him to use every means for rendering them in the highest degree palatable and digestible.

While bull-baiting was still sanctioned in England as a wholesome culinary process, our ancestors in-

tenerated pigs by whipping them to death, a treatment that produced the requisite bodily convulsions and mental distress in the dying animal. Addison tells us that in his time the fastidious epicure would commend a sucking pig, or a piece of older pork, to his friends with the assurance that the creature had died under the lash. But though ordinary folk saw nothing objectionable in this culinary practice, moralists debated whether man was justified in using it for the gratification of his palate. With a seriousness that, taking the statement from the domain of humour, gives it historic dignity, Charles Lamb observes, in his "Dissertation on Roast Pig," "I remember an hypothesis argued upon by the young students when I was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, 'Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?' I forget the decision."

Uninfluenced by the votes of the Catholic students, the humourist differed in no degree from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals with respect to the barbarity of the process. "Yet," he added, "we should be cautious, while we con-



demn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto."

At present, none but a rashly-daring man would venture to defend our ancestors' flagellatory treatment of the young pig, whose flesh was by nature sufficiently soft and soluble. But in judging their equally repulsive treatment of the ox, we should remember the toughness and hardness of the animals that they worried into tenderness. The beef of "Old England" lacked the juicy richness and delicacy of the modern sirloin. Operating on creatures that bore little resemblance to the high-bred, stall-fed brutes of the Smithfield Cattle Show, the butchers of olden England would have lost their customers had they refused to worry their oxen with bull-dogs.

The same apology cannot be made for cruelties still perpetrated by dealers in meat. When we are virtuously indignant with the bull-baiters of former time, who were cruel for the sake of texture, we should reserve some of our wrath for the wretches who, to this day, are far more cruel for the sake of colour. To produce a veal of excellent whiteness, it is still the brutal custom of butchers in some parts of England to kill young calves by flogging them.

Even Monsieur Louis Eustache Ude would have conceded that the attainment of a superior colour

in a viand was no sufficient object to justify the infliction of extreme torture on a helpless animal. According to this Frenchman any cruelty was permissible, and even commendable, in cookery that was conducive to health or the palate's gratification. But he went no further. In his receipt for a "matelotte of eels" he says lightly and concisely, "Take one or two live eels. Throw them into the fire. As they are twisting about on all sides, lay hold of them with a towel in your hand, and skin them from head to tail. This method is best, as it is the means of drawing out the oil, which is unpalatable." Assailed by an Edinburgh Reviewer and other critics for the apparent cruelty of this precept, Ude defended himself in the seventh edition of the "French Cook" by remarking, in a note, "Several gentlemen have accused me of cruelty for recommending in my work that eels should be burnt alive. As my knowledge of cookery is entirely devoted to the gratification of their taste, and the preservation of their health, I consider it my duty to attend to what is essential to both. The blue skin and the oil, which remain when they are skinned, are highly indigestible. If any gentleman or lady should make the trial of both, they will find that the burnt ones are much healthier; but it is, after all, left to their choice whether to burn or skin." It is clear on which side Monsieur

Ude would have spoken and voted had he taken part in the discussion on the propriety of whipping pigs to death. By the way Monsieur Ude, in his youth, was designed for the Church, and had received the first elements of a clerical education.

But enough for the present of processes that are no less revolting than singular. To relieve him of disgust occasioned by recent recitals, let the next few pages entertain the reader with dishes that are curious without, at the same time, being cruel.

When he told his readers how Arcestratus, the Syracusan, used to cook a pig so that it was roasted on the one half and boiled on the other, Isaac Disraeli was not aware that an earlier writer had given even more precise directions for the same culinary achievement. In the ninth book of the "*Deipnosophistæ*," Athenæus describes how a hog may be served, with one half well roasted and the other delicately boiled. Dishes of this kind were in high favour with the ancient epicures, and the taste for them was transmitted by the gourmands of the Roman Empire to the mediæval gastronomers. They were, also, occasionally seen on the tables of our ancestors in Charles the Second's time.

Together with Athenæus's receipt for thus trifling with the sublime grandeur of a boar, Baptista Porta, in the "*Natural Magick*," gives directions for cooking poultry and fish in the same fantastic

manner. He instructed the chefs of the sixteenth century how to fry, boil, and roast a lamprey all at once, and how to surprise a novice in gastronomy with a capon, one half roasted, and the other half boiled. To accomplish this last-named exploit, the cook had only to lay a properly-dressed capon on its side in a rather deep dish, add broth till the liquor rose over the lower half of the fowl, and then put the vessel into the oven. "The upper part of the capon," says the author, "will be roasted by the heat of the oven, and the under part will be boiled. Nor will it be less pleasant to behold."

When he had feasted to excess on birds and beasts cooked thus curiously, the gourmand of Charles the Second's time was in a condition to derive benefit from the stomach-brush or "pro-vang," which Judge Rumsey of Gray's Inn contrived, during the Commonwealth, for the seasonable relief of gentlemen who had overeaten themselves. Mentioned in the "Book about Doctors," this elegant invention is also described in a number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1750, where the inquirer may, moreover, find a picture of the apparatus. But no student who would fully understand the inventor's "instrument to cleanse the stomach," and ascertain the conditions most favourable for its efficacious use, should fail to peruse the "Organon Salutis" (1657), wherein the Judge

commends his harmless and convenient brush as a substitute for the perilous emetics of the apothecary. It is, he observes, "a whalebone instrument, which may be made from two foot in length or more to a yard long, after this form, to be used for all ages, according to the stature of their bodies. It may be made after the form of a long feather out of a goose-wing, with a small button of fine linen or silk, to the bignesse of a cherrystone, fastened at one end, which goeth into the body, and with a string fastened at the other end, that a man may use and draw it out at pleasure. These are commonly sold in London, and especially at the long shops in Westminster Hall. If it be kept in water, it will be as gentle as may be desired. It must be stirred gently, and always used after some meat and drink, as any man liketh best, and findeth occasion for it."

For fear of shocking the polite reader, the present writer forbears to recite Judge Rumsey's minuter directions for the use of the brush, which, strange to say, proved less agreeable to epicures than the contriver hoped it would be. "Sir, I have tried your sherry, and I prefer the gout," the last Lord Derby replied to the puffing wine-merchant, who had sent him a sample of "pure unbrandied sherry," of which it was asserted the Earl might drink two bottles a-day without provoking an attack of his



podagra. The epicures took the same view of Judge Rumsey's "first remedy: the provang." Having tried it, and even praised it into transient fashion, they preferred dyspepsia, tempered by old-fashioned emetics, notwithstanding the obvious disadvantages of the ancient medicines. "My dear doctor," an Irish gentleman observed to Dr. Babbington, "it is of no use your giving me an emetic. I tried it twice in Dublin, and it would not stay on my stomach either time."

The men who made trial of Judge Rumsey's stomach-brush belonged to a generation of daring and self-sacrificing experimentalists. Some of them would "swallow small white pebble stones, to cool the heat of their stomachs, which," adds the witnessing inventor of the provang, "I conceive to be in imitation of long-winged hawks." Others of them cooled their coppers with leaden bullets. "I have known others," says Judge Rumsey, "that used to swallow small bullets of lead, which giveth me occasion to report a strange history which I know to be true. An old souldier and commander in Queen Elizabeth's time, in the Low Countries, was drinking of healths among his companions, and at every health did drink a pistol bullet to the number of eighteen, which continued in his belly for neer the space of two years. He acquainted a physition with his case, who did hang the souldier

by the heels, by a beam in a chamber, and then all the bullets dropped out of his mouth again ; but the same were somewhat worn in his belly. The souldier is yet living, and in good health, and about fore-score and ten years of age."

The Younger Brunel (Isambart Kingdom) was amusing his children with conjuring tricks, when he slipped into his mouth a half-sovereign, that, entering his gullet, lodged there for a few days. To relieve the engineer of his sufferings, his physicians caused him to be raised from his sofa, feet upwards and head downwards, when the coin dropped through the patient's mouth to the floor. Mr. Brunel's misadventure has been thought a singular case. But it is a trivial affair in comparison with the case of Judge Rumsey's soldier. Sceptics will probably reject the lawyer's story as a fiction. The reader may be left to decide between the judge and his censors.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## NUMBERS AT TABLE.

"Terna tibi hæc primum triplici diversa colore  
 Licia circumdo, terque hæc altaria circùm  
 Effigiem duco, Numero Deus impare gaudet."  
*Vide VIRGIL, ECL. VIII.*

"Crowd not your table, let your number be  
 Not more than seven, and never less than three."  
 DR. KING'S "ART OF COOKERY."

"The more the merrier, the fewer the better cheer,—Two are company, three are none."—OLD PROVERBS,

"Que le nombre des convives n'excède pas douze, afin que la conversation puisse être constamment générale."—BRILLAT-SAVARIN'S "PHYSIOLOGIE DU GOUT."

"En France tous les nombres sont bons, hors le nombre treize."  
 —ALEXANDRE DUMAS' "DICTIONNAIRE DE CUISINE."

THOUGH epicures differ as to the best number of guests for an agreeable dinner, they are unanimous in holding that no party, with enjoyment for its sole object, should be too numerous for general conversation. Like the best authorities of ancient Rome, on matters pertaining to the table, some of the most eminent Amphytrions of modern England have insisted that dinner should never be served for less than three persons, the number of

the Graces, or for more than nine, the number of the Muses. Dr. King, Swift's friend, and the author of "The Art of Cookery," thought nine too many by two for perfect enjoyment. In his opinion, the feasters at a banquet should never be so few as two or exceed the number of the days in a week. Grimod de la Reynière's favourite number was three, but he allowed it to be raised to six, which no dinner party ought, in his opinion, to exceed under any circumstances. "*Les dîners fins se font en petites comités. Et comme une fricassée de poulets ne sauroit être parfaite si l'on met plus de trois, de même un repas de fonceés amateurs ne doit excéder six couverts.*"

Twelve has, however, been declared a permissible number by the finest gourmands of modern France and modern England. Brillat-Savarin and Alexandre Dumas insist that, though less desirable than a smaller party, a dinner of twelve may be altogether successful.

The largeness of the number does not preclude general conversation, when each member of the assembly is careful to address the company rather than his next neighbour, and talks for the general enjoyment rather than his own pleasure. But though it is possible for a speaker to make himself heard over a table of twelve without raising his voice to the pitch of declamation, or to

any offensive loudness, an animated talker is apt to become too noisy and oratorical at so large a meeting. The conversational competition of twelve persons too often begets the clamorous contention that puts an end to sociable gossip, and is more prejudicial than any other disturbing influence to gastronomic enjoyment. With due respect to the many eminent feeders who have spoken of the number with approval or toleration, it may be questioned whether so many as a dozen persons should ever be invited to the dinner, which is designed for something better than formal and ceremonious hospitality.

Two will always remain with high epicures the best of all *social* numbers for an artistic regalement. More secure from disturbing incidents than any higher number, it is especially favourable to gastronomic sympathy and the poetry of feeding. Especially conducive to mutual confidence and the enthusiasm of friendship, the *tête-à-tête* dinner is distinguished by an almost sacred repose. Lord Barrymore and his Jacobite physician, Dr. Beauford, had no need to talk of their devotion to the Pretender, when they exchanged looks of ecstasy and unalterable affection over their choicest dishes.

“You know Lord Barrymore?” Dr. Beauford was asked during his examination by the Lords of the Privy Council.



"Intimately, most intimately," replied the Doctor.

"You are continually with him?" urged the questioner.

"We dine together," was the answer, "almost daily when his lordship is in town."

"What do you talk about?"

"Eating and drinking."

"And what else?"

"Oh, my lord, we never talk of anything except eating and drinking, drinking and eating."

Of what else should two wise and delicate feasters speak at a *tête-à-tête* meal? To them the subject comprehends the whole domain of the higher interests. Together with the generous emotions, it covers politics, philosophy and art. Moreover, for such fervid politicians as our lord and his doctor, two is an agreeably *safe* number at table, should the talk run into politics and treason. The law of England declares three persons, at least, to be requisite for a conspiracy. And even moralists have held that a man may defend himself against a treacherous comrade, by repudiating as false the traitor's true report of words interchanged "under the rose" of social confidence.

Perfect harmony is endangered by the introduction of a third person. In compliment to the Graces, the Fates, and possibly the Furies, the

ancients were frequent givers of dinners for three. When Lucullus, Cicero, and Pompey dined together in the Chamber of Apollo, at a cost of seventy-five thousand sesterces, they had a perfect menu; but the felicity of the meeting scarcely equalled that of Lucullus's dinners with himself, or Lord Barrymore's *tête-à-tête* "feeds" with his congenial doctor. The traitor at a *tête-à-tête* repast may be defeated with permissible perjury; but disastrous truth may be established out of the mouths of two witnesses who, on leaving a dinner of three, combine to hand their common associate over to his political adversaries. When he has decided to ask a third, Amphitryon had better invite a fourth guest. Harmony is exposed to less peril by the fourth than by the third. If the third possesses any unamiable propensity, it may be corrected by a contrary disposition in the fourth. Moreover, with four at table, dinner may be followed by whist, a game beloved by gastronomers beyond all other games.

For a festal meeting of philosophers, five is the fittest of all numbers. Unproductive in addition—(five+five equals ten, *i.e.*, equals only *one* cypher)—the number, which symbolizes virginity, is sacred to Minerva, whose festival, the Quinquatrus, began on the *fifth* day after the Ides of March, and in the time of Ovid lasted for *five* days. Cognizant of these facts,

the Fellows of our Royal Society should relinquish the periodical dinners of their entire brotherhood, and blush to dine together in any number exceeding Minerva's symbol. In further commendation of five as the number for a dinner of *savants*, it should be observed that it is admirable for the purposes of scientific discussion. Whilst five learned minds are enough for the ventilation of nice questions of science, a party of that number is less likely than a larger assembly to be guilty of such exhibitions of animosity as sometimes disturb the serenity of philosophers in debate. Moreover, it is well for learned men to assemble in an uneven number, so that the functions of moderator may be discharged by an "odd man," who, voting only when the disputants on both sides of an argument are equal, may determine even controversies by a dispassionate casting vote.

But whether they are philosophers of many "ologies," or epicures whose one philosophy has reference to the enjoyments of the table, six (Grimod de la Reynière's number) is better than five for a party consisting of representatives of both sexes. When the sexes meet at the social board they should be equally matched—at least, in number. They should also be arranged so that their alternation is complete. The man is never altogether content at a dinner-table who, with a

lady next him on one side, has a man for his other neighbour. It is even worse when two of the gentler sex are seated together. Like a swimmer with one arm tied, and therefore powerless to use the other effectively, the woman who is denied the stimulus of a flirtation on her left hand can seldom flirt brilliantly and consistently with her partner on the right. For this reason, eight and twelve are inconvenient numbers for a party of both sexes at an oblong table, with the hostess at the top and the host at the bottom, after the old fashion.

Seven, the mystic number with which the ancient Egyptians divided time into weeks, has several claims to consideration as the proper force of celebrants for a festal exercise. Whilst the dinner, a noble work, reminds one of the greatest of all creative achievements, it may be well that the number of the guests should equal the six days of productive labour and the one day of rest. With Dr. King, as we have already seen, *seven* was a maximum number for a banquet of wits. And certainly the number is quite enough for an assembly of "wits," all overflowing with raillery, and more ready to talk than to listen. Bedlam on visiting-day, at the full of the moon (as it was in the old time when the moon still affected the phrenzies of lunatics), would be less deafening than a meeting of twelve such table-talkers as Sydney Smith. The thunder-storm of

such a meeting would burst and spend itself without any “brilliant flashes of silence.”

Far better than seven, for a meeting of both sexes, and not too many for a small dining-room, eight is not a number to be shut out of respectful consideration by a pedantic reiteration of Dr. King’s precept. It is much in its favour that it is the favourite number of one of our most enlightened epicures, a man scarcely less honourably known in literature and the arts than in the profession of which he is a brilliant leader. After much consideration and experience in hospitable labours, this consummate entertainer insists that, whilst eight is neither too many nor too few for the requirements of social intercourse, it had several economical recommendations. A dinner for eight is so easily managed in the kitchen that the chef can give the proper amount of personal attention to each item of the menu, and is not compelled to expend his powers on the chief works of the menu to the prejudice of subordinate, though important, dishes. Moreover, a bottle of wine, distributed by a judicious butler, gives eight glasses, a fact that of itself commends the number to the *Amphitryon* whose wines are curious and costly, and who never sends the same wine twice round his table. Anyhow, the “octaves” of this entertainer are so successful and



famous that they have given the dinner of eight a new place in epicurean annals.

Besides commemorating the Muses, nine possesses in an especial degree the luck which folk-lore has for centuries assigned to odd numbers. "I'll hold," says Falstaff in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," "this is the third time: I hope, good luck lies in odd numbers. Away, go; they say, there is a divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death." If three was lucky, much more so was three times three. The decalogue is honoured by the feast for ten persons. Eleven, an odd number, covers the ten commandments and the precept of mutual love. Mention has been made of twelve. A questionable number, it is too good to be rejected, and not good enough to be accepted, without a murmur. Just not too many for sociability under favourable conditions, twelve are barely enough for pomp and ceremonious grandeur. When it comprises four persons ambitious of leading the conversation, the party of twelve is often unmanageable; and when found too large for general gossip, it is also found too small for subdivisions into knots and coteries. Still, in spite of its disadvantages, it ranks among the sociable numbers.

To speak of the difficulty of placing guests, is to think of the different shapes of the table. For the grand dinner of two dozen or thirty guests, no

board is better than the oblong table. Larger banquets require the horse-shoe board, or one of the several combinations of long tables—the L, the H, or the Pi table. For smaller parties the circular table is excellent. But it is inconvenient for a company exceeding twelve; the circle, whose circumference affords ample space for eighteen guests, being so large that each sitter is at a most unsocial distance from his diametrically opposed fellow-guest, whilst the middle of the board, lying beyond reach of hands, is so much useless area. King Arthur's round table was a mythical impossibility. The oval table has all the advantages, while avoiding the disadvantages, of the circular board. The full-sized square table is best for a party of eight. By the way, "square meals" is an American colloquialism for meals taken at table, in contradistinction to "snacks" taken from a buffet. The rectangular table should always be so large that two persons may sit in line at the top and two side by side at the bottom; and, for reasons already indicated, at a party of eight or twelve persons, taken in equal numbers from both sexes, either end of the table should be occupied by a gentlewoman and her cavalier. The *Amphitryon* whose dining-room is too narrow for such table, or whose rectangular table is too narrow to admit of such an arrangement, should compass a perfect alternation of the sexes by

putting a man at either end of the board. It is no longer a point of dignity with a lady to sit at the upper end of her own table.

A word on the woods of which dining-tables may be made. Rose-wood, walnut, maple—indeed, any wood that takes a good polish, and by its colour pleases the eye,—may be used for other furniture; but in England oak and mahogany are *the* woods for the festal table. “The old tree” of the olden English was invariably an oak; but in later times it has been generally supplanted by the mahogany, which came into vogue in the days of Anne and her nearest successor. Dr. Gibbons, the physician whom Dr. Radcliffe detested, and nick-named “Nurse Gibbons,” may be thanked for the warm-coloured wood with which we have so many agreeable associations. His brother, a West Indian captain, brought over some of the wood as ballast, thinking it might possibly turn to account in the London. At first the carpenters, in a truly conservative spirit, refused to have anything to do with the “new wood,” saying it was too hard for their tools. Dr. Gibbons, however, had first a candle-box, and then a bureau made for Mrs. Gibbons out of the condemned material. The bureau so pleased his friends, amongst whom was the Duchess of Buckingham, that Her Grace ordered a similar piece of furniture, and introduced the wood into

high life, where it quickly became the fashion. Ere long the wood of the warm hue and brilliant "polish" was seen in every dining-room of good society; and in order that they might see their glass and plate reflected on the lustrous surface of their mahogany, epicures ordered the cloth to be removed before the after-service or dessert. Thus the new wood, having put conservative oak into disfavour, introduced a new table-fashion.

Much may be said in behalf of solitary dinners. If two is the number of social confidence and security, one is the number of *unsocial* safety. In troublous times the wretch who can trust no one does well to dine alone. The secrets which a man confides to himself at a lonely regalement are in his own keeping, and it is only by his own act that they can be brought in evidence against him. Even more than two, one is a number favourable to harmony. The man who can agree with no one else may at least be able to think well of himself. He can approve his own arguments when there is none to oppose them, and applaud the *jeux d'esprit* of which he is the creator and sole recipient. Two has been declared company, when three may be no such thing; but to certain natures two at a table is one too many, whilst one at a feast is the perfection of companionship. "There is society where noise intrudes," and epicures have declared that this society is best

cultivated at a sybaritic board. Of course the man may be found who, shunning all men, thinks meanly of himself. But the anchorite who, in his solitude, quarrels with himself is a prodigy of captiousness and self-hatred that defies consideration. Ceasing to dine, he should starve himself out of existence as soon as possible.

Lucullus never dined more sumptuously than when he dined alone. All readers remember how he upbraided his chef for serving him a cheap repast (costing about £100 of English money) when "Lucullus dined with Lucullus," and no one else. Equally great as a consumer and a composer, Haydn liked to dine alone and eat much. It was his custom to order dinner for five at his favourite hotel, and at the appointed hour to devour the whole banquet. "Serve dinner," he said on one occasion to a new waiter, who was not aware of the musician's way of sustaining himself. "The dinner is ready," returned the waiter, bowing respectfully to the hotel's best customer, "but, Sir, the company is not come." "De gompany!" Haydn retorted contemptuously. "Pooh! de gompany! I am de gompany." The dinner for five was forthwith put before "de gompany," and not an eatable scrap of it found its way back to the kitchen. Haydn's ducal contemporary of Norfolk was another lordly feeder, who delighted to eat at a Covent Garden



tavern food enough for five ordinary feasters. But the duke, more sensitive of observation than the musician, never again dined five times at once in the hotel where his gastronomic capabilities had caused the waiter to regard him with obvious amazement. The Curé de Brequier, immortalized by Brillat-Savarin, was another solitary diner, who could eat at a sitting as much food as would keep a working man in vigour for ten days. The reverend gentleman could refresh himself thus liberally under observant eyes with perfect composure. Brillat-Savarin once saw him, in less than three-quarters of an hour, sweep into his stomach a quart of soup, a plate of bouilli, a large leg of mutton, a superb ham, a copious salad, a pound or two of cheese, a prodigious quantity of bread, a bottle of water, a full bottle of wine, and a cup of coffee. "*Après quoi,*" says the narrator of this exploit, "*il se repose.*" Severely accurate, Brillat-Savarin is careful to state that the curé did *not* eat either the ham-bone or the bone of the *gigot*.

A dinner less remarkable for grandeur, but famous for the humour of its eater, was consumed by the President of the Tribunal at Avignon.

"By my faith," said this excellent judge of law and good cheer to an interested auditor, "we have just had a superb turkey. It was excellent, stuffed to the beak with truffles, tender as a chicken, fat as

an ortolan, aromatic as a thrush. By my faith, we left nothing but its bones !”

“ And how many were there of you ?” inquired the curious hearer.

“ Only two,” answered the gourmand, with a self-complaisant smile.

“ Only two ?” ejaculated the simple auditor, with amazement.

“ Precisely so,” the lawyer answered ; “ only two. There was myself and there was—the turkey.”

This judge was a man of infinite jest ; but in gluttonous ability he was surpassed by an Englishman of letters and politics, who at his solitary dinner in an Old Bailey beef shop ate seven pounds and a half of solid meat, sliced from a round of boiled beef. As his customer ate, the keeper of the shop regarded him with increasing anger ; for diners at the establishment were at liberty to eat as much as they pleased for a stated sum.

“ Capital beef,” said the gourmand graciously, when he at length rose from his seat, “ a man may cut and come again here.”

“ You may cut, Sir,” responded the purveyor of dinners, “ but I’ll be blowed if you shall come again.”

The story went about the town, and in its travels encountered the famous caricaturist, who retold it in a familiar cartoon, which gave the Reverend Rowland Hill his irreverent simile for the divine grace.

•

"The grace of God," said the jocular but earnest preacher to the congregation whom he lured heavenwards with pleasantries, "is like a round of beef; you may cut and come again."

If historians may be believed, Grimod de la Reynière—the editor of the "*Almanach des Gourmands*," and uncle of the famous Count d'Orsay—had a son worthy of his epicurean father. Travelling towards Paris, Grimod de la Reynière (père) alighted from his carriage at the entrance of a provincial hotel, with an appetite that demanded immediate and copious satisfaction.

"Let me have for dinner," he cried, "everything good and eatable in the house."

"Alas, Sir," answered the landlord, "my larder is empty, and I can give you no dinner."

At this moment, the opening of a door enabled the epicure to see seven turkeys on a broach before a splendid fire. Sniffing the rich savour of culinary incense that came through the kitchen door, Grimod de la Reynière exclaimed indignantly,

"Are you mad or insolent? I see seven turkeys on the spit."

Again asserting that his larder was empty, the host explained that the seven noble fowls—the only good provision of the house—were on the point of being served for a young gentleman who had ordered them for his dinner.

“What! seven turkeys for one gentleman—for one *young* gentleman?” urged the amazed and hungry traveller.

“It is so,” answered the Boniface.

“Conduct me to his chamber. At least he will spare me one of his seven birds!” Grimod de la Reynière implored.

The landlord consented, and in another minute the chief illuminator of Parisian gourmands was bowing courteously to the youth who, with the daring of his years, had ordered seven turkeys to be cooked for his solitary meal. The youth was De la Reynière’s son.

“What!” cried the father, angrily, “is it you who ordered *seven* turkeys for your dinner?”

“Sire,” said the son, with fine emotion, “pardon the apparent vulgarity of my taste and conduct, so unbecoming in one who has the honour to be your offspring. Believe me, I am the victim of circumstances. My taste, my hereditary genius impelled me to order a more varied repast. But the larder contained nothing, my host could give me nothing but the turkeys.”

“But why, my dear boy,” inquired the mollified parent, “be so extravagant as to order seven turkeys, when, surely, two would have been enough for your appetite?”

A smile of conscious worth and self-respect brightened the youth's visage, as he replied,

"Father, you have always told me that a turkey not stuffed with truffles comprised no part save *les-sots-les-laissent*" (*Anglice*, "oyster," or "the parson's nose") "fit for a gentleman's plate and palate. I ordered the seven turkeys in order that I might dine off the fourteen *les-sots-les-laissent*. What other course was open to me under the distressing circumstances?"

The father and son embraced each other. Two hours later, the elder Grimod de la Reynière proceeded on his journey full of turkey and overflowing with parental pride.

The story is excellent; but unfortunately it has been told of half-a-score fathers and sons, besides the two De la Reynières. The careful author of "The Art of Dining" assigns it to Brillat-Savarin and his eldest boy, and says that the number of turkeys roasted for the youthful *gourmet* did not exceed *four*. Such contradictions bewilder the simple reader, and dispose the critic to regard the anecdote as apocryphal. The sceptic asks whether the editor of the "Almanach des Gourmands" had a son. In the confusion of claims and uncertainty of titles, any masculine reader of this page, with a son of suitable age and taste, is at liberty to



appropriate the story and tell it of himself and his heir.

In the way of eating money, it is probable that no modern epicure has surpassed the achievement by which the Vicomte de Vieil-Castel won a wager of five hundred francs, under the eyes of half-a-score Parisians of the highest fashion, who watched the astounding performance with equal delight and amazement. Monsieur le Vicomte had undertaken to consume five hundred francs' worth of food and liquor within two hours. Of course he was allowed to order the costly repast. It consisted of twenty-four dozen Ostend oysters, thirty francs; a soup *aux nids d'hirondelles*, one hundred and fifty francs; a beef-steak, two francs; a fish (*une ferra*) from the Lake of Geneva, forty francs; a pheasant stuffed with truffles, forty francs; a salmis of ortolans, fifty francs; a dish of asparagus, fifteen francs; a plate of young peas, twelve francs; a pine-apple, twenty-four francs; a dish of strawberries, twenty francs; a bottle of Johannisberg, twenty-four francs; two bottles of Bordeaux, fifty-francs; half a bottle of Constance, forty francs; half a bottle of choice sherry, that had been to India and back, fifty francs; coffee and liqueurs, one franc fifty centimes; total, five hundred and forty-eight francs, fifty centimes. Thus the cost of the dinner exceeded the stipulated sum by forty-eight francs and

a half. The victor had sipped his concluding liqueur and café, and received the congratulations of his spectators before one hour and forty minutes had passed since he took his first oyster. Of course, both in respect to the quantity and the cost of the aliments consumed, this exploit would have been mere child's play to Lucullus dining with Lucullus. But for a modern it was a creditable performance. So that he may account for the high price of some of the items of the menu, the reader should be told that the affair came off in the middle of an unusually severe winter.

The solitary diner (if he be an epicure, and none but epicures can be justly said to dine) seldom fails in appetite for food. But he usually drinks more freely than he eats. The Vicomte de Vieil-Castel drank four bottles of wine at his little repast. "When one dines alone," said Theodore Hook, "the bottle *does* come round so fast." On being asked whether he had taken the whole of three bottles of port at a solitary dinner, without any assistance, Sir Hercules Langrishe replied, "No, not quite that, I had the assistance of a bottle of Madeira." Whilst lovers of good cheer may in their hours of loneliness humour their gulosity, to any degree of self-indulgence, without incurring social obloquy, it is generally thought scandalous for a man to drink deeply in the absence of

fellow-topers. Dr. Johnson held an exactly contrary opinion, and acted upon it. Indeed when he allowed himself the rather discreditable pleasure of drunkenness, he disdained to take it in festal society. "Sir," he once said to Boswell, "I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits, in the second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me."

The auricular nerves being intimately related with the nerves of the nose and palate, it is not strange that whatever afflicts the hearing is prejudicial to a process which appeals directly to the taste and smell. Always averse to noise whilst they are eating, epicures shrink instinctively from speakers with harsh and overbearing voices. It is the reverse with mere gluttons. Always noisy at meat, both in their speech and their manner of eating, gross feeders delight in uproar and riotous associates. Some epicures are so sensitive of sound, that, whilst tumultuous clamour completely paralyses their palates, they require perfect silence in order to appreciate delicate flavours. "Ah, gentlemen, keep a little quiet, one does not know

what one is eating," said Montmaur, the French *gourmet*, who fed nicely in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, and who, in his reasonable recognition of the piquancy which his discreetly exercised wit gave to a repast, used to say to his friends, "You find the meats and wine, and I will find the salt." It is on record that Thackeray—a man of fine gust as well as of lofty genius—required unbroken silence for the full enjoyment of a dish of superlative merit. In order that justice should be done to a *matelote* of exquisite goodness, served at a Parisian dinner, he paused after the first taste of the charming preparation, and turning to Mr. Hayward, said beseechingly, "My dear fellow, don't let us speak a word till we have finished this dish." The novelist, by the way, is said to have been the first to discover that, to be perfect, a curry should contain a slight flavour of crab.

For the highest gastronomic pleasure, silence was no less necessary to the famous Marquis of Hertford, the wicked lord whose portrait may be found in the pages of Thackeray, Disraeli, and Reynolds, to say nothing of a score other novelists. A man of wit, who relished wit in his companions, the Marquis was also a consummate epicure, who held that, whilst sprightly conversation heightened the delights of the table, it should be jealously used as nothing more than a subordinate influence towards

the higher enjoyments. Theodore Hook was the most judicious of table talkers. Jubilant over his claret at dessert, and vociferously hilarious towards early morning over his gin-and-water, he bridled his frolicsomeness at the epicurean board. His talk between the soup and the cheese consisted of gently stimulating pleasantries, thrown about in the intervals between courses. On the appearance of each fresh course he grew taciturn. Whilst a culinary work of extraordinary excellence was under consideration, he was always as silent as death. His great influence with his patron was largely due to his discretion at table.

Never jealous of young aspirants in the social arts, and above all things sedulous for his patron's amusement, Theodore sometimes introduced to the Marquis's table a new talker about town. His selections of candidates for preferment from the rising generation of "diners out" were never made without consideration, and rarely failed to achieve their object. On one occasion, however, he committed the serious blunder of bringing to one of his lord's "little dinners" a gentleman who, in his zeal to fascinate the noble entertainer, forgot that colloquial smartness is not more requisite than ability to keep silence in a professional parasite.

"Don't bring that young gentleman again," the



Marquis observed on the following day to his chief jester.

“He told some good stories,” Hook urged, at the same time defending himself and the absent culprit.

“True,” returned the Marquis, “I will not do him an injustice. He has a very good collection of stories, and he tells them with considerable cleverness; but, my dear Hook, he does not know *when* to tell them. I was in the middle of that charming matelote, as perfect a thing as my man ever sent to table, when he disturbed me with an epigram. It was a good *jeu d’esprit*, doubtless. So much the worse for me and my matelote. A bad *mot* would have occasioned me less disturbance. I may not be ruffled in that way, my dear Hook, when I am dining.”

Gallantly fighting for his protégé, Hook replied, “The honour of dining with you, my lord, elated him, and made him too talkative. Moreover, he would have done better had he been less anxious to impress you favourably.”

Never deficient in generosity to his friends, or in good breeding to his enemies, the Marquis relented. “Well, Hook,” he said, graciously, “you may bring him again *next season*, when you have trained him to good manners. I’ll give him another chance. The

animal has some good points ; but at present he is only a half-broken colt."

This story should be taken to heart by young "lions" and other adventurers, who would talk themselves into favour at the tables of "the great." Lordly entertainers are not always so forbearing and lenient as the Marquis of Hertford, who gave the offender of the story a second chance. Many a smart adventurer, after gaining admission to great houses, and figuring for a season as a "man in society," has been dropped in the ensuing year by the fastidious patrons whom he has offended by overbearing or excessive loquacity at dinners to which he was invited "on trial."

"A guest," says Dick Humelbergius Secundus, in the "Apician Morsels" (1829) "who knows, through the medium of a conversation, as original as decent and humorous, how to captivate the attention of the numerous guests who surround and listen to him, may assure himself that he will always be sought after, and consequently invited by the host for whom he becomes a powerful auxiliary at dinners which he may be pleased to offer his friends." But to succeed in his more difficult than lofty vocation, it is not enough for the commensal to talk cleverly on several subjects and give new points to old stories. His speech must be seasonable and considerate, or, whatever its vivacity and

abundance, it will diminish the satisfaction of the company. His first duty is to please, and to accomplish this end he must assist others to shine whilst displaying his own brilliance. Instead of extorting attention he should render it. Playing the part of a courteous and sympathetic listener, he should smile complacently at badly delivered anecdotes, and feign contentment when he is irked by prosy gossips, or irritated by his professional competitors. Above all things he should refrain from raising a laugh to the sacrifice of a sauce, or to the prejudice of a gastronomic sensation.

Some epicures are so sensitive of noise, that for the full appreciation of delicate fare they require, in addition to silence, a sense of security from auricular disturbances. To these scarcely fortunate though finely organised beings, the mere presence of companions who may be startled into inopportune speech, or of servants who may destroy the voluptuous stillness by dropping a fork or glass, is enough to create a nervous unrest incompatible with perfect felicity. The gastronomer, thus delicately or morbidly constituted, seldom consents to dine at a table set for more than three persons. Shrinking from the bare imagination of a possibility of agonizing interruption, he prefers to dine by himself, and to ensure the requisite tranquillity by dispensing, as far as possible, with attendants. If he permits a servant

to watch him at his repast, the menial wears list slippers, breathes lightly, and has been retained on the understanding that immediate dismissal from his office will follow the first noisy *faux pas* that he may commit in the performance of his duties. It is, however, more usual for the gourmand of extremely sensitive hearing to eat in perfect solitude, his attendant retiring, after the service of each course, to an ante-room, whence he can be summoned or otherwise ordered by the noiseless signals of an "indicator," similar to the contrivance which an ingenious coach-builder has recently substituted for the carriage check-string. The "revolving dumb-waiter," to be placed on the solitaire's dining-table, is another arrangement for the epicure who desires complete isolation at his meals. The volant table, invented by Louis the Fifteenth and the Pompadour, may also be adapted to the requirements of the solitary eater, who, by means of the beautiful invention, may receive all the courses of an elaborate banquet from the hands of invisible and inaudible ministrants. By pressing a spring gently at the close of each course, he causes his table to descend slowly through the floor, and then, after the lapse of a few minutes, he sees it rise silently, and place within his reach a fresh supply of culinary comforts. The only grave objection to this magical table is that its delicate mechanism is liable to disarrangement

through the neglect or clumsiness of servants. Its provisions, however, ensure perfect noiselessness, if the flaps or sliding panels of the trap door are properly padded. Of course, it is needless to remind the fairly educated readers of this page that Louis the Fifteenth's volant table was constructed for a party of thirty, and that the purpose of its joint inventors was not to compass silence at meals, but to afford a numerous company the greatest possible amount of privacy and perfect freedom from the embarrassing attentions of servitors. Had such a table been known to our ancestors of Alexander Barclay's time, it would have been commended by the censorious poet who, assailing with equal severity servants and their masters, wrote :—

“Slowe be the sewers in serving in alway,  
 But swift be they after, taking the meate away;  
 A speciall custom is used them amonge,  
 No good dishe to suffer on borde to be longe;  
 If the dishe be pleasaunt, eyther fleshe or fyshe,  
 Ten handes at once swarme in the dishe;  
 And if it be fleshe ten knives shalt thou see,  
 Mangling the fleshe, and in the platter flee,  
 To put there thy handes is perill without fayle,  
 Without a gauntlet, or els a glove of mayle.”

Quin only reproduced an old sarcasm when he declared that no one could dine safely at a civic turtle-feast, unless he went to it armed with “a basket-hilted knife and fork.” In the sixteenth



century the volant board would not have improved the manner of the gentlefolk who fed themselves with their fingers, but it would have preserved them from the officiousness of liveried menials. In recent times, the general distrust of servants who may report maliciously the incautious speeches uttered at table, has been increased by the odious practice of employing them as political spies.

Though a dozen is the highest number of feasters for a social party, any greater number, with a single exception, may be invited to the board which is spread for ceremonious and ostentatious hospitality. Banquets for twelve times twelve persons, and for still larger companies, are of frequent occurrence. The Duke of Norfolk, mentioned by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, would not have relinquished his purpose of celebrating the ter-centenary of his ancestor's exaltation with a dinner to all his living kindred, had the descendants of Jock of Norfolk numbered no more than three thousand.

It remains to say a few words of the single exception to the rule that declares all numbers "good for a feast." Whilst his vigorous and subtle mind regarded vulgar superstitions disdainfully, Comte could not liberate himself from the fascination of numbers. Thirteen had a peculiar charm for him, as the seventh prime number, *i.e.*, the seventh number that has no factors. He experienced an animating

sense of good fortune whenever he found himself at table with twelve other companions. In nothing was he more eccentric than in this preference for a number that has for centuries been regarded as the number of evil omen.

The dismal incidents which followed the Last Supper occasioned the ancient opinion that whenever thirteen, and no more, persons broke bread together, death would in the following year take at least one of the party. Writing in the earlier half of the seventeenth century, Peter du Moulin (styled pedantically Petrus Molinœus) observed, "If there are thirteen guests at a feast, it is believed that one of them will die within the year; for just so many persons reclined at table when Christ celebrated the Eucharist on the day before he died. Thus, also, amongst the superstitious thirty is a number of evil omen, because Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver." The superstitious repugnance to thirty has not endured. That number is commonly seen at the pompous dinners of our London entertainers, and it never causes uneasiness or provokes remark. But the prejudice against "thirteen" still endures. It affects even vigorous minds, who are none the less troubled by it because they are aware that an average mortality removes yearly from the world at least one out of every thirteen persons of middle or old age. Lord Chancellor Erskine could never be in-

duced to seat himself at a table with only twelve other people; and the same nervous dislike to be one of thirteen at a social meeting is felt by a considerable proportion of educated Englishmen, who are secretly ashamed of their weakness in yielding to a superstitious fancy.

Some years since poor Albert Smith gave a supper of thirteen that discredited the superstition in a remarkable manner. Himself on the point of starting for China, he entertained twelve friends who were bound for the Crimea, to encounter the perils of war as military officers, or as journalists reporting the incidents of the conflict. Deeming it in the highest degree improbable that they would meet again on English ground when they had once started for the scene of danger, the twelve guests met their host with light hearts, and laughed about the fate which some of them would of course encounter in a few months. Strangely enough, all twelve returned from the war in perfect health, and supped again at a table of thirteen with the humorous lecturer.

Mindful of the slowly-dying superstition, which "dying hard" is still powerful over a large proportion of ordinary minds, the prudent Amphitryon thinks twice before he arranges for a party of fourteen, since a single "failure at the last moment" would reduce the company to the fatal number. If he has

in reserve a trencher-man, whom he can summon at the last instant to act as *quatorzième*, or a child whom he can place in a vacant chair, he orders for fourteen without misgivings. But in default of such resources against untoward accident, he limits his party to twelve or raises it to sixteen. In George the Third's time, it was thought that thirteen persons might safely dine together if the party comprised a lady with reasonable hopes of adding to the population in the course of a few weeks. Reference is made to this opinion by a correspondent of the "Gentleman's Magazine" for July, 1796. The French of the same period held that thirteen persons might sit together at the same board and yet escape the penalty, if one of the party, sacrificing himself for the rest of the company, refrained from partaking of the cheer. Grimod de la Reynière was of this opinion.

At the same time it was generally believed by our grandfathers, that Paris contained a select body of "diners-out" who subsisted chiefly by officiating as guests at tables where the presence of a professional *quatorzième* was requisite for the company's contentment. Even so late as thirty years since a writer in one of our magazines described, with excellent minuteness, a gentlemen who occupying an apartment within a stone's throw of the Palais Royal, had long followed the calling of a fourteenth guest

in the highest circles of French society. For a moderate fee and a good dinner he appeared on the shortest notice at the social board of any of his patrons; and when on duty he never failed to charm by his agreeable address the persons with whom it was no less his business than his pleasure to dine on terms of apparent equality. The professional *quatorzième* of Parisian society was the purely fictitious creation of the humorists. But fiction treated him so realistically that he was long regarded as a veritable personage on this side of the Channel. And laughingly enough, whilst Londoners believed in the Parisian *quatorzième* as a recognized power of good society in France, the Parisians amused themselves by telling how, in that equally ludicrous and perfidious Albion, it was usual for gentlemen of narrow means to earn a precarious subsistence by letting themselves out as *quatorzièmes* to aristocratic entertainers. We have outgrown our belief in the *quatorzième* of Paris; but Paris still believes in the professional "fourteenth" of the English dinner-table. Some three years since a French illustrator of the English and their ways, told the readers of a leading Parisian journal how a certain Monsieur Fitzjones, residing in a highly fashionable street near Leyssterre Squarr, earned his daily dinner and piece of gold by appearing as *quatorzième* at the table of a rich milord or Sir Baron.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## SOUP.

“I hate French cooks, but love their wine;  
 On fricassee I scorn to dine,  
     And bad’s the best ragout;  
 Let me of claret have my fill,  
 Let me have turtle to my will,  
     In one large mighty stew

“A napkin let my temples bind,  
 In night-gown free and unconfined,  
     And undisturbed by women;  
 All boons in one I ask of fate,  
 At city feasts to eat my weight,  
     And drink enough to swim in.”

THE ALDERMAN’S WISH.

“Il faut manger sa soupe bouillante, et prendre son café brulant.”  
 —ALMANACH DES GOURMANDS.

THEODORE HOOK enjoyed soup and fish till he merrily declined a plate of turtle on the plea that he was not a soup-or-fish-al person. The pun became famous, and, to support it with consistent behaviour, the jester henceforth abstained from the two species of nutriment.

Like the Romans, our mediæval ancestors were large consumers of soups. They had flesh-broths, fish-pottages, vegetable-soups, and soups concocted in various proportions of meat and vegetables, and

of fish and vegetables. The pot, as we have seen, was their commonest cooking utensil, and pottage was their commonest diet. Some of their richest soups contained so much meat or fish that the culinary historian doubts whether he should not rank them with broths or hashes. These same pottages were also thickened with grain and meal. In his fondness for fluid food, the mediæval epicure could seldom relish meat until he had drowned it with pottage-liquor. He covered his slice from a haunch of venison with frumenty *i.e.* wheat-pottage—a preparation that, still seen at rude tables in the provinces, was banished long since from polite boards in favour of bread-sauce. “When I consider bread-sauce in all its branches, I am proud that I am an Englishman,” a Regency epicure said of the modern substitute for the obsolete frumenty. The French deride our bread-sauce, calling it poultice, and maintaining that it should be used only by surgeons.

Consisting altogether of water and herbs, the thinnest of the old vegetable soups were properly called herb-pottages. The Church commended them as fit diet for meagre days; and in seasons of fasting they still find favour with the religious persons who observe the Church’s culinary ordinances. Nourishing in the lowest degree, they are sometimes agreeable to the educated feeder if pre-

pared cleverly. Concocted according to ancient receipts, they are interesting to the antiquary, who regards them as "survivals" of the culinary medicine which was so largely present in the mediæval cuisine. When physic was invariably administered in the form of herbs, green-meat pottages were given for curative purposes. Like the other medicinal compounds of the period, these spoon-food stomach mixtures contained from a score to half a hundred herbal ingredients, each of which was prescribed for the consumer's health.

Delighting in hot soups, our ancestors were also great consumers of cold pottage. An old rhymster says :

"Peas-porridge hot,  
Peas-porridge cold,  
Peas-porridge in a pot,  
Nine days old."

Of all the thick soups which he lapped with ecstasy in their fluid state, there was not one from which the old epicure turned when it had cooled into substance, and acquired the consistency of the mortrew, the jelly, and the standing compote. But to win his unqualified approval, it was necessary that a cold soup should contain a large number of "brawns" stewed to such tenderness that they melted in the mouth. When the mediæval cook said "Take brawns," he meant "Take pieces of

flesh." The rich meat soups of old time were made chiefly of "brawns," chopped in "gobbets" and "dices," that floated in a hot fluid, thickened with meal and pounded flesh. Served cold and "chargeant," these soups were commonly called "brawns" long before an ingenious chef produced the "collar" and "shield" of "brawn proper." This should be borne in mind, for it gives the etymology and pedigree of our modern "brawns," those gelatinous viands that are never regarded at breakfast or supper without approval.

In the earlier centuries of our feudal time, meats were almost always served with more or less juice, in gobbets, slices, or dices. In the later centuries of the same period, it became usual with the best chefs to serve "large pieces" of flesh in their pottages, taking care, however, that these nobler masses were boiled to extreme tenderness. Pieces, that in course of time came to be called "joints," were thus boiled for the Tudor tables and served in a rich broth of meat-juice and vegetables. Calves' heads, gigots, and rounds of beef were cooked whole in this fashion, and at table the "pieces" so cooked and served were, for the carver's convenience, taken from their deep soup-dishes and put on flat trenchers. The modern "joint" in its separate dish owes its place on the festal board to this olden mode of transferring from

the pot to flat dishes the larger ingredients of the "pot's luck." So also the fashion, not yet quite obsolete, of garnishing boiled joints with boiled carrots, turnips, parsnips and other vegetables, points to the period when such "pieces" were brought to the board in a large deep vessel, brimming with the multifarious contents of the big kitchen pot. "Another time," says Misson, describing English cookery at the close of the seventeenth century, "they will have a piece of boiled beef, and then they salt it some days beforehand and besiege it with five or six heaps of cabbages, carrots, turnips, or some other herbs or roots, well peppered and salted, and swimming in butter." And he adds, "When they have boiled meat, there is sometimes one in the company that will have the broth; this is a kind of soup, with a little thin oatmeal in it and some leaves of thyme and sage, or other such small herbs. They bring up this in as many porringers as there are people that desire it; those that please crumble a little bread into it, and this makes a kind of pottage." Misson put his feet under the English table just at the time when it became the fashion to serve the boiled meat and pot-liquor separately, instead of bringing them to table in the same vessel.

Pork, beloved by our feudal fathers as fervently as by the ancient Romans, was of all meats the



flesh most liberally thrown into the pot ; and whilst “coddling” it to exquisite softness, with a view to cold soup of superlative merit, the old English cooks became connoisseurs of the material, and consummate makers of “brawn.” The meat was stewed slowly and for several hours. It might remain in the pot almost any length of time without injury to its virtues ; but it was never taken from the seething vessel until it was so tender that “a brused rush or soft straw could be thrust cleane through the fat.” In order that they should not be “done to rags” by this process, the pieces of swine’s flesh were bound round with bulrushes, osier-peels, tape, or string, before they were put into the water. On being taken from the boiler they were exposed to cooling air, and when they had acquired firmness they were “soused” for several days in good ale, or in beer seasoned with verjuice and salt, the sousing liquor being renewed from time to time. For the manufacture of this “brawn,” pork of the finest quality was used. “Collars of brawn” were made from the boned neck-pieces, whilst “shields of brawn” were made from the shoulders. Brawn proper was seldom made of any but the fore parts of the animal ; the flesh of the hinder parts being designated “souse,” when it had been duly sodden and pickled.

A viand peculiarly English, brawn was highly

esteemed by our ancestors, who placed it on their tables at dinner and supper on almost every flesh-day between the first of November and the last of February. At the same season on fish-days they ate slices of cold fish-porridge, which was prepared so as to resemble pork brawn; and this gelatinous fish-food was sometimes called "brawn."

William Harrison is at great pains to describe the processes for making brawn, and he gives us several stories which exhibit our ancestors' pride in the national dainty. In their ignorance of its nature, the French cooks, after the fall of Calais, destroyed most of the large stock of brawn found in the city by attempting to roast, bake, broil, or fry the delicate fare. Supposing that it was made of fish, a pious French gentleman had imperilled his soul's salvation by eating in Lent a quantity of "souse" sent out to him by an English nobleman. Better still, an English humourist, whilst residing in Spain, had entertained certain Jews with the forbidden meat, and in their simplicity the wretched Israelites had literally gorged themselves with "shields" and "collars" of the unclean viand.

The English soups of the seventeenth century differed little from the soups of the mediæval English, save that they sometimes contained joints of meat instead of gobbets. Cotgrave makes honourable mention of several varieties of oat-meal pottage,

as "meates very wholesome and temperate, and light of digestion," the best of them being the ale-porridge, or groat-ale, *i.e.* oat-meal soup, made with malt-liquor instead of water. From this "groat-ale," rendered in base Latin *grutellum*, came the modern term "gruel." Daisy soup was an Elizabethan herb-pottage (good for the brain), of which the modern epicure would rather read than partake. The same may be said of nettle-soup, highly commended by the old doctors for "procuring sleep," "helping coughs," and assuaging the gout. Another medicinal pottage of the seventeenth century was snail-soup, made of garden-snails, earth-worms, a score or more herbs, and strong ale, boiled together and strained. As the squeamish reader will soon be invited to relish a plate of turtle, he shall not be told too precisely how this choice concoction was prepared for the special benefit of invalids stricken with consumption. It is enough to say, that snail-broth held its place in culinary medicine so late as the beginning of this century, and that an elaborate receipt for preparing it may be found in "The Pastry-Cook's Vade Mecum" (1705).

So long as the English of every social grade were habitual consumers of pottage, their dames and soldiers were as clever at making palatable broths "out of nothing" as the French are at the present time. It was a common saying with our thrifty

housewives two centuries and more since, that any simpleton could make a soup with a little salt, a can of water, and a handful of garden stuff. Giles Rose re-tells the story of the two soldiers, one of whom went without broth, whilst the other made excellent pottage from a stone. The fellow who begged at an open door for all the materials for a simple pottage, was told that he required too much and must go elsewhere. His comrade, taking a stone from his knapsack, asked only for a pot in which to boil his stone. Even a miser would have granted so modest a request. The pot was supplied, and soon the wily soldier was boiling a large stone under the curious eyes of half-a-dozen bystanders. Could one of them give him a little salt? the cook asked. The salt was given. A minute later the cook observed, "A few herbs make a pleasant seasoning for stone-broth, but I must manage for once to relish soup without a perfect flavour." In a trice one of the spectators threw a bundle of herbs into the pot, saying, "So clever a fellow ought to have a soup to his taste when he shows us how to make it of a stone." After another while the adventurer observed, "Stone-broth is good broth, but there is no question that a scrap of meat or bacon brings out the flavour of a flint-stone." Half-an-hour had not passed since his arrival at the house, when the soldier was enjoying an excellent pottage made of

the materials supplied by his spectators for the *improvement* of his broth.

Stone-broth made in this manner was as rich and nutritious as several of the soups served on meagre days to the quality of Charles the Second's London. That sovereign's chef, Giles Rose, gives receipts for several pottages that may have amused the palate, but can have afforded no satisfaction to the empty belly. For instance, his Herb Pottage without Butter was made of herbs, water, a slice or two of bread, and a few capers to render the mess a "little sowerish." His Bran Pottage—the strained liquor, in which bran, a handful of almonds, and a few sweet herbs had been boiled—was another broth that a saintly man might take on Friday with an easy conscience, or an invalid drink without fearing its inflammatory power. Another of the same artiste's cheaper vegetable soups was Pompeion (or Pumpkin) Broth. Mr. Rose's Snow Pottage—made like the mediæval white-soups, of milk, eggs, rice, and sugar—was a richer, as well as more agreeable, soup for fast days. In the time of many fish-soups, however, there was no lack of generous and highly nutritious broths for carnally-disposed feeders on saints' days. For instance, "Potage à la Reyne" was an eel-soup, to gratify an epicure's gust or stay a farmer's appetite. Sole, carp, tench, indeed all the fishes commonly brought to table, were also



served in pottages that would now-a-days be called “stews” and “hashes.”

Mock-turtle soup was known to our ancestors long before they made acquaintance with real turtle. The mediæval gourmands delighted in calf’s-head broth, whose thick and lubricous liquor was loaded with strips of the gelatinous viand. The Restoration epicures preferred another cookery for the head. Instead of cutting it into pieces, they removed the bones, stuffed it with force-meat, and, after boiling it to proper tenderness, put it whole upon the table in a dish brimming with broth. Using his knife and the new fork, the carver distributed slices of the head with each apportionment of the soup, and sometimes for his convenience removed the viand from the broth-bowl to an adjacent trencher. Hence “calf’s-head” is another of the “modern joints” that were served in the pot together with other elements before they were promoted to separate dishes, and made to figure as *pièces de résistance*.

In default of turtle—a material which, strange to say, did not find its way to the English table till we had held our West Indian possessions for several generations—the Restoration cooks made with the flesh of the land-tortoise a pottage of considerable merit, though inferior in every respect to the soup which renders the sea-tortoise glorious in death.

“Take your tortoises,” says Giles Rose, “and cut off their heads and feet, and boyl them in fair water, and when they are almost boyl’d put to them some white wine, some sweet herbs, and a piece of bacon, and give them a brown in the frying-pan with good butter, then lay them upon your bread a-steeping in good strong broth, and well-seasoned; garnish the dish with green sparrow-grass and lemon over it.” It is questionable whether tortoise-soup ever held a high place amongst gastronomic creations, but it appeared from time to time in the menus of fastidious epicures, till it was banished from the kitchen on the introduction of turtle.

In language alike creditable to his head and his heart, the learned author of the “*Tabella Cibaria*” (1820) says of the turtle, “This splendid and delicate gift, sent from the Transatlantic Nereids to the gastronomers of the old world, could not be known to the ancients, and we regret that the pens of Martial, Juvenal, and Horace had not to describe the three-fold quality found in the flesh of this enormous reptile and amphibious animal. How harmoniously calipash and calipee, tasting accidentally so much of Grecian origin, might have begun Hexameter, or ended Iambic verses! For instance,

“*Callipash hinc gustum languentem provocat, inde  
Novum ministrat appetitum Callipee.*”

“And it seems a pity that the tortoise, the shell of which was adapted to the lyre of Mercury, had not the gratification to accompany the dithyrambic odes composed, as they would have been, in enthusiastic praise of her testaceous sister, the turtle. Some travellers mention the turtle as an inhabitant of the East Indian seas; but the nautical knowledge of the Greeks and Romans was so very confined that, were this assertion positively true, they would not have obtained a sufficient acquaintance with this excellent food. However, it never appeared upon their tables.”

The turtle found its way to London *viâ* Bristol. It was still a dainty seldom seen at the richest tables of the metropolis, when the merchants of the western port feasted habitually on the grandest of all soups. The recent developments of British commerce have enabled several of our subordinate cities to surpass Bristol in wealth and populousness. She is no longer the “second city of the Empire;” but time cannot rob her of the right to boast that her sons were the first inhabitants of Great Britain to appreciate the virtues of the turtle. Apart from this fact, a singular uncertainty covers the whole history of the creature’s introduction to the modern table. When a writer on *The World* (No. 123, May 8, 1755), noticed the new food, it was a luxury often seen at the feasts of our richer epicures.

A passage in Lord Lyttleton's "Dialogues of the Dead," supports the general opinion that it was first brought to our tables between the years 1740 and 1750. There is no doubt that it was a principal feature of civic banquets long before the second George had closed his exemplary career. At the beginning of the present century, six pounds (live weight) of turtle was deemed a fairly liberal provision for each guest at a solemn dinner. The four hundred gentlemen who feasted off turtle at the City of London Tavern, in August, 1808, managed to consume without any fatal accident or immediate discomfort, twenty-five thousand pounds of the delicious fare.

In the days of our grandfathers, few men were more notorious in London than Samuel Birch, the best confectioner in "the city," and first purveyor of turtle-soup in the whole capital. Inheriting a fine business from his father, the famous Cheapside pastrycook drew to his shop epicures from every quarter of the town. The merchant, who slipt away from his office at mid-day for "a plate of turtle at Birch's," took his luncheon in a room thronged with gourmets from the Inns of Court, and dandies from Bond Street. Forest venison could be bought at Birch's, as well as all the good things usually provided at a restaurant. But during the turtle season No. 15, Cornhill was

emphatically a turtle house, and customers seldom entered it without a view to turtle. "On the tables," says Dick Humelbergius Secundus, "are placed the lemons, cayenne, and other condiments, with toasted French bread for the free use of the visitants."

But Samuel Birch, whose business passed eventually to Messrs. Ring and Rymer of gastronomic renown, was much more than a successful dealer in table delicacies. A man of wit and letters, he produced plays that held the stage, and books that are still readable, though seldom read. One of his musical dramas, "The Adopted Child," was popular long after the author had killed his last turtle and breathed his last breath. His temper was so amiable and his humour so lively that he heartily enjoyed the joke when, on his appointment to be colonel of the City Militia, it was proposed to style him Marshal *Tureen*. "By all means," the confectioner cried gaily to the originator of this witticism, a brother officer in the Militia who, as a great flour and corn merchant, regarded confectioners disdainfully, "and you shall be Marshal *Sacks*." Scarcely had the dealer in flour, a pompous and choleric gentleman, felt the first sting of this blow from the Birch, when his annoyance was increased by a roar of laughter from the hearers of the smart reply. Neither of the prin-



cipals in this duel survived his recollection of the affair. But whilst Birch always smiled cheerily at acquaintances who greeted him as Marshal Tureen, the "other marshal" reddened with rage whenever an allusion to "sacks" was made in his hearing. An efficient officer of his regiment, Marshal Tureen gained some credit as a military author from his essay on "National Defence."

So cheery and clever a gentleman as Mr. Birch could not fail to win the approval of his fellow-citizens. Throwing himself into local politics, he figured as common councillor, alderman, and Lord Mayor, the year of his mayoralty being the famous 1815. When Chantrey's statue of George the Third was placed in the Council Chamber of Guildhall, during the Waterloo year, Birch's pen produced the inscription for it. Fortunate in business and friendship, this prince of pastrycooks was also fortunate in his children. His daughter married Lamartine the poet, and one of his sons, a good classic student, begot a family of scholars.

With the exception of their lightest meagre soups, some of which were almost as thin as water, our ancestors' soups were notable for thickness. Most of their vegetable pottages were thickened with meat and grain, and most of their fish broths were unstrained messes that on cooling resembled brawn in firmness and substantiality. The flesh soups,

like our "mock turtle" and ox-tail," were served with pieces of flesh floating in their heavy liquor. The clear gravy soup of the modern English table is a comparatively recent invention, which resulted from the efforts of chefs to enrich their meagre soups with forbidden ingredients, and at the same time escape clerical detection and censure.

It is told of the Count de Flavigny, whilom French Minister at Parma, that he commanded his chef, Leblanc, to learn how the *garbures* served on meagre days at the Hôtel de Noailles were prepared. Being on friendly terms with the maker of these *garbures*, Leblanc had no great trouble in ascertaining that their excellence was due to a subtle use of gravy extracted from white meats. The chef, who thus dared to disobey the rules of the church, was at infinite pains to clarify the meat juice, which he furtively added to his clear herb pottages, alike to the advancement of his fame and the delight of his patron. The "doctored" *garbures* being in no degree discoloured or clouded by the clear gravy, their unusual goodness was attributed to the pious skill of the cook, who was applauded for superior art when he should have been punished for satanic artifice.

Acting on instructions that were given in strict confidence, Leblanc became no less famous than his teacher as a maker of *garbures*. In Paris, the

Count's table on fast days was never without guests who by merest accident happened to "drop in" at his dinner hour. The friends who surrounded him at his country seat were no less delighted with his meagre pottages. Leblanc was pressed on all sides with entreaties for the secret of his success. No one was more curious and urgent for enlightenment than the curé of the parish in which Flavigny's estate lay. But Leblanc was faithful to his promise of secrecy. "Sir curate," he answered his clerical petitioner, "I will tell you how I make my *garbures* when you are a bishop." Leblanc subsequently kept a Restaurant in the Rue de la Harpe, where he added to his renown by the ham pies which Grimod de la Reynière could never mention without emotion.

The practice of strengthening clear maigre broths with the colourless juice of white meats having become general, it was not long before chefs produced clear soups, that strong with the gravy of red meats, pleased the eye whilst charming the palate. Of clear gravy soup there are, at least, a hundred varieties.

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